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# Teacher Perceptions on the Ethics of Using Corporate-Sponsored Curriculum in the Classroom

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Teacher Perceptions on the Ethics of Using Corporate-Sponsored Curriculum in the Classroom

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

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Dominican University of California

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## Signature Sheet

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the Chair of the Master's program, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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## Abstract

Corporate involvement in education has always been a hotly debated issue. Is it a conflict of interests if companies provide material and information to schools? Or is it their civic responsibility and best interest to help promote education in order to create exceptional future employees? As budget cuts continue to devastate public schools throughout the United States, districts and teachers are looking for alternative means to provide the best education that they can. Many corporations are providing additional resources at minimal to no cost to schools, but with what consequences? Corporate created curriculum does not have as rigorous restrictions or oversight as state/district adopted curriculum. Companies are essentially allowed to produce whatever they see fit, often leading to biased information and covert advertising. This study takes a critical look at the ethics surrounding the use of corporate-sponsored curriculum in public schools from a teacher perspective. Elementary teachers participated in a survey to research their perspectives on the effects of using corporate-sponsored curriculum within a classroom. Results were mixed, and teachers did not seem aware of the possible ramifications of using corporate-sponsored curriculum in their classroom. Overall, this study found that teachers need to learn more about corporate-sponsored curriculum and its possible effects on students. Teachers, sites, and districts should create a protocol to review commercial materials, and consider both the positive and negative consequences of bringing them into a classroom.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Educators have always worked to create a safe environment in which children learn not only fundamental skills, but also how to become valued members of society. Education provides a means for people to pass down beliefs and cultural values to a younger generation that will then adopt or adapt them in the future. Since 1970, companies have started to do the same by seeking out education as a way to advertise to students who are essentially a captive audience (Schor, 2004). I was first introduced to this phenomenon during my freshman year of college at Dominican University of California while taking the honors course, “Consumerism and Globalization.” This was a business course that focused on the effects of commercialization and consumerism on children and how that is changing our world.

The class read a book by Schor (2004) that has one short chapter on corporate involvement in schools that can take any number of forms (paying for a field and having it named after the company, providing vending machines, giving away free technology and educational materials, having students watch Channel 1, etc.). This chapter immediately caught my attention being an education major taking a mandatory business course, and inspired (and continues to push) me to look at it more intensely. An initial research project on corporate involvement in schools led to this topic that needed more exploration; this thesis paper is my opportunity to do so.

From my initial paper, I discovered that most teachers had never heard of “corporate-sponsored curriculum” in that term, but they almost all used it within their classrooms. Parents were also not familiar with the term “corporate-sponsored curriculum” (CSC) but about once a month, their children would typically bring some home without them ever realizing the source of such materials.



One of the most influential companies that provides corporate-sponsored curriculum that most public schools and families support is Scholastic, Inc. Most schools have book orders and book fairs that are almost exclusively from Scholastic. School libraries are filled with Scholastic books, and teachers are encouraged to participate because the more books families buy, the more free books that teachers receive; a seemingly win-win situation. After student teaching at a public school in Marin County, I was given advice to sign up with Scholastic as soon as possible because you can quickly build up an extensive class library with very little money out of your own pocket. Although this is clearly financially beneficial to me, what are the consequences of working with a corporation? What influence are corporations having on public K-12 education where I work? Are teachers aware of corporate influence and are there any guidelines for corporate materials' use?

Corporate-sponsored curriculum (CSC) is defined as any educational materials that a company gives to a teacher or school for free or at a minimal cost (Schor, 2004). It can take the form of textbooks, supplemental resources, lesson plans, computer software, library books, and other instructional materials. The intention of this study is to enable educators as well as parents to become more aware of the potential risks and benefits of CSC so that they can make informed decisions regarding its use. This study surveyed teachers from one public elementary school about their use of and opinions on CSC.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the problems with corporate-sponsored curriculum in public schools is the lack of regulation governing them (Consumers Union, 1995). Companies are essentially given free reign over what they produce which often leads to biased, incomplete, or commercial information. They then give these materials to schools for free or little cost. Schools and teachers from

economically challenged schools are attracted to these “freebies”, especially now with increasing budget cuts that make purchasing good, interactive curricula extremely challenging. Teachers are also attracted to these because such materials offer pre-packaged lessons that require little to no preparation time, and perhaps more importantly, little to no money out of their own pocket for supplies. These lessons use familiar popular-cultural images or brands to engage students and connect them to the materials.

The other part of this problem and, what many teachers may not be aware of, is that by using these products, they are acting as de facto advertisers and endorsing the company and its products. When students see brand names and logos presented in an environment by an adult they trust (i.e. by a teacher in school), they are more likely to gravitate toward that product/company when buying items in the future. Some students may also start to believe that they *need* those products in order to succeed in school since they saw their teacher present them.

Parents, the “gatekeepers,” are typically not aware of what curriculum is used within the classroom besides seeing the main textbooks that students may bring home for completing their homework. It is unlikely that they would be aware of any use of corporate-sponsored materials in classrooms, and, therefore, would not be in a position to intervene. Furthermore, teachers may not realize the source of the lessons either because intra-teacher collaborations and sharing lessons is encouraged. In many such situations, the source of information is not always clear; and typically teachers will use the lessons if they engage the students in class. The true intentions of companies can be convoluted and debated as to whether they give away these educational materials to simply advertise and gain loyal consumers or if they truly want to help students and schools. One fear is that by showing students certain brands and products in the classroom, students will begin to subconsciously believe that they need that product to succeed in school.

**Purpose Statement and Research Question**

The purpose of this study is to gain the perspectives of a sample group of elementary public school teachers on their use and opinions of CSC. The primary research questions for this study investigated the following: 1) What is their knowledge of CSC? 2) How much of their teaching materials include CSC? 3) What are teachers' ethical dispositions on the use of CSC?

**Theoretical Rationale**

The theory behind the topic of corporate-sponsored curriculum relates to the question surrounding "what is the role of public education?" It is an issue that goes back to the debate of what democracy means and stands for, and how education fits into that. Dewey, a psychologist, philosopher, educator, and political figure from the late 1800s considered education to be a way to instill democracy in the younger generations and pass down cultural beliefs. His book emphasized the fact that education is comprised of social interactions in which experiences are passed from older to younger generations. It is through this social context that society passes down its knowledge and beliefs, and by eliminating barriers and allowing members to participate, we create a democratic education (Dewey, 1966).

As the United States continued to grow, capitalism influenced and changed the democracy that Dewey envisioned. Becker (1994) encouraged the capitalistic aspects of education when he coined the term "human capital" in the 1970s and presented the economic advantages to investing in education in order to get more out of it later—a better paying job for the students and a more qualified and profitable employee for the corporations. Although this concept had been previously discussed, Becker made the term much more widespread and companies started paying attention, and investing in schools.

Prior to this, the socialist movement warned of capitalistic influences on society and education. Morris presented a socialist theory in the late 1800's by warning that capitalistic goals can bend education to meet its own goals and make education essentially meaningless (Freeman-Moir, 2012). This is one of the main concerns of most people involved in the socialist movement who were aware of corporate involvement in education. Are corporations just fulfilling their own goals to the detriment of our children?

Kozol further supported Dewey's dream of a democratic education more recently in the late 1900's, when he called for an equitable education for all students (2005). He believed that one of education's main goals is to help students achieve their "American Dream" and that this should be done through literacy, critical thinking, and the use of relevant materials. The quintessential American dream is based upon a capitalistic model where people are able to rise above their current means and make more money to gain success. Big corporations were established through this same capitalistic model. Although Kozol and Dewey made no mention of the corporate role in education, their vision of democracy has been compromised due to the capitalist origins of how democracy has evolved into a more consumerist model. Kozol and Dewey wanted education to promote and continue the ideal of democracy. Through the growth of capitalism, it can be argued that this ideal has been skewed, such that capitalistic views of corporations have become systematically embedded within social and educational contexts. Another argument that can be made is that education has been commoditized in order to advance commercial interests, that has increased educational inequity.

Teachers, by the very nature of their positions, are ethical and moral leaders in the classroom (Campbell, 2003). The ethical disposition of teachers plays a large role in the education of younger generations. Campbell asserted that teaching is an inherently moral

endeavor, but teachers are not fully aware of the moral and ethical implications of their actions (2003). It is stated that “not everything that teachers do *necessarily* has moral significance, but any action a teacher takes *can* have moral import” (Campbell, 2003, p. 22). All actions of teachers can impact students, whether it be in the way that teachers act and react to situations or what curriculum and pedagogy they use: “applied professional ethics provides teachers with the means to reflect wisely on the moral implications of what they say or do not say and do or do not do, not only in dilemma-type situations, but also in the course of their routine work” (Campbell, 2003, p. 10). The authors repeatedly stated that teachers are not often fully aware of the full ethical impact they can have on students, and building this awareness helps to create an ethical educator. “It is simply that students (and others in the professional teacher’s world) have a moral right to be treated fairly, kindly, honestly, and with competence and commitment. Also important is the associated, but more consequential, consideration that students learn lessons about morality through their experiences with teachers” (Campbell, 2003, p. 23). Teachers demonstrate and interpret these moral characteristics in a number of ways which causes discrepancies about what is moral and what is not. This lack of agreement among teachers and educational institutions lends itself to the use of commercial materials in the classroom and the ensuing ethical ramifications from such use.

### **Assumptions**

There were several assumptions made that reflected my own personal experiences and biases, and prior research on the topic when initially embarking on this research project. The first bias reflected my own experience as an educator and wanting to see educators in a good light. I hold to the belief that the majority of teachers want their students to learn to the best of their ability, and to do so, they provide the best resources and lessons that they can. I believe that

teachers are very nurturing and only want the best for their students, and thus may use unconventional methods of teaching or scrounge around for different resources. This could lead teachers to use corporate-sponsored curriculum. It is also true that many teachers believe in collaboration and will share lessons and resources that they found interesting or their students responded positively to. Despite all of the pressure to adhere to purely research-based curriculum, teachers often present the same material in many different ways and will thus supplement their mandated curriculum to do so.

Another assumption was that big corporations have their own goals and profit in mind as their top priority even when performing a civic duty, like giving materials to schools. Big corporations have many people whose entire jobs focus on making sure the company has a strong profit, and Public Relations employees work to make sure that they are doing so in such a way that the public will approve. I believe that this is one of the main reasons why companies give educational materials to schools for free. It allows them to appear philanthropic to the public while still providing a method to increase sales. I am less suspicious of small, local businesses who do not have all of these resources and employees to focus on marketing to children in schools though. I feel like if they want to contribute to schools, it will be more out of the generosity of their heart.

Another assumption that was made is that most parents would object to having their children learn from materials produced from big corporations like Pepsi and General Mills. While parents may want the best education for their children, they would not think that the source of that education comes from corporations.

**Background and Need**

In 1995, Consumers Union issued a report on their study of corporate-sponsored kits and packets that were being supplied to schools. This study looked at corporate-sponsored educational materials and media programs; contests and incentive programs; Channel One and other ad-bearing media; and in-school advertising. Each type of material was judged on its accuracy of information, completeness, objectivity, non-discriminatory nature, and level of commercialism. This study found that with more than 100 samples of educational curriculum, “Nearly 80 percent contained biased or incomplete information, promoting a viewpoint that favors consumption of the sponsor's product or service or a position that favors the company or its economic agenda” (Consumers Union, 1995, para. 79). Even materials that had been independently developed were not found to be more objective or less commercial on the whole. “State laws and regulations governing commercial activities in public schools are not comprehensive....in most states, local school officials are responsible for making decisions about commercial activities” (Government Accountability Office, [GAO], 2000, p. 3-4). This leads to a wide variety of policies regarding commercial activities (even within the same district), largely based on the local school officials opinions and attitudes toward the subject (GAO, 2000).

Findings indicate that there is a great need to examine corporate-sponsored curriculum and its place in education. If there is a role for it to play, then it does not appear to be fulfilling it by producing inaccurate and biased information. Furthermore, it has been almost 20 years since this study was completed; how have things changed? Why are teachers and parents still not aware of this phenomenon? Why has it not been addressed on a state or federal level?

## Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

### Introduction

Most literature on corporate-sponsored curriculum presents only one viewpoint on the subject: positively from a corporate view, or negatively from an educational view. The four recurring topics that I found in my research were the positive and negative considerations of using corporate-sponsored curriculum, the ethics surrounding its use, and examples of corporate-sponsored curriculum. The literature review focuses on the theoretical and applied benefits and consequences of corporate materials in the classroom, but it does not review actual teachers' opinions or views on it.

### Historical Context

Corporations have long been involved in the education of children. During the early 1900s, many logging, mining, and fishing towns in the United States were created and supported by companies. This included the schools that companies created and/or supported in order to create more workers (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2009). In 1890, "a paint company developed a handout on primary and secondary colors for schools to distribute in their art classes" (GAO, 2000, p. 5-6).

Corporate-sponsored curriculum in its present form first started in the 1970s when Roberta Nusim, an English teacher in New York's South Bronx, started approaching companies to help create more innovative and up-to-date curriculum (Schor, 2004). It was also around this same time that corporations "were starting to take notice of James McNeal's estimates of child spending and recognizing that their influence was expanding beyond what cereal moms would buy" (Schor, 2004). Nusim created Youth Marketing International (which also goes by Young Minds Inspired) which has since produced more than 1,500 curricular programs. Corporations



have also begun marketing specifically to schools and children on their own and have large think tanks to figure out how to best do so (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2009).

### **Review of Previous Research**

#### **Positive considerations.**

When looking at corporate-sponsored curriculum, there are many positive considerations to take into account. First and foremost, schools are receiving additional resources for their students. During this hard economic time, many schools are struggling to even have enough textbooks for students to use (Consumers Union, 1995; Kanner, 2008; Pennsylvania, 2002; Schor, 2004; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2009). They are often outdated and inadequate, but schools cannot afford to update them, much less provide supplemental material to students.

Another major positive for teachers is that corporate-sponsored curriculum often comes in the form of prepared lesson plans with succinct lesson kits that have all learning goals, directions, and materials ready to go (Lay, n.d.; Kanner, 2008). Teachers are attracted to these as lesson planning is intensive, time consuming, and sometimes costly depending on the necessary materials.

Students are also often excited and drawn in by the corporate-sponsored curriculum because of its use of popular culture references and logos (Kanner, 2008; Linn, 2004; Schor, 2004). There is a lot of curriculum that is technology based (computer or television) which attracts students as well (Lay, n.d.). The presentation of material is often more flashy and interesting which hooks and holds student interest. All of these are attractions for teachers as well.

#### **Negative considerations.**

What many teachers are not aware of is that by using these products, they are acting as

advertisers and endorsing the company and its products (Linn, 2004; Schor, 2004). The curriculum provided by companies typically has its brand name or product in most of its examples or somehow incorporated throughout. When students see this, especially presented in an environment by an adult they trust, they are more likely to gravitate toward that product/company when buying items in the future (Linn, 2004; Manning, 1999). Parents, the “gatekeepers,” are typically not aware of what curriculum is used within the classroom besides seeing the main textbooks that students may bring home for homework (Schor, 2004). It is unlikely that they would be aware of any use of corporate-sponsored materials in classrooms, and therefore would not intervene if they saw an objection. Teachers may not realize the corporate involvement either as collaboration and sharing lessons is encouraged so the source of information is not always known; if it is a good lesson that students enjoy, then they will use it.

There are no or few laws regulating corporate created materials so companies basically have free reign over what is produced, often leading to biased, incomplete, or commercial information (Consumers Union, 1995; Commercial pressures, 1995; Erickson, 1981). Corporations will often entice schools with good deals or generous gifts like giving the schools free computers if the school will allow the company to monitor what websites students visit while using them. This and other seemingly philanthropic gestures justify in many administrators’ and teachers’ minds the use of corporate-sponsored materials (SEMs or CSC). The true intentions of companies can be convoluted and debated as to whether they give these materials to simply advertise and gain loyal consumers or if they truly want to help students and schools. Ultimately, the company’s bottom line is profit, so any involvement it has in schools will “create student experiences and shape student attitudes in ways that support, or at least do not undermine, the corporate bottom line” (Molnar, Boninger, & Fogarty, 2011, p. 8). A

partnership between schools and companies through sponsorship offers companies a good cause to get behind, while the company increases its name recognition and gets its products inside of schools (Molnar & Molaes, 2000).

### **Ethical considerations.**

Ethical considerations that should be taken into account are the effects on students corporate involvement will have. Children are more vulnerable due to their age, lack of experience, and lack of critical thinking skills (Molnar & Garcia, 2006). One fear is that by showing students certain brands and products in the classroom, students will begin to subconsciously believe that they need that product to succeed in school (Manning, 1999; Commercial pressures, 1995). “Advertising not only persuades children to buy more, but it also promotes the idea that they can derive identity, fulfillment, self-expression, and confidence through what they buy” (Molnar et al., 2011, 2). The 2011 Consumerism Trends report also advocated that corporate involvement is linked with the discouragement of critical thinking because messages from companies leave out information—especially information that could construe a negative image on the product/company—or contradict lessons taught in school (Molnar et al., 2011). “Although it is not always obvious, corporate curriculums are inherently self-serving. “Sponsored lesson plans do not give students objective viewpoints or teach them to think critically” (Molnar & Garcia, 2006, p. 80). This leads to an ethical dilemma for teachers who are preparing the next generation workforce where critical thinking skills are highly valued.

### **Examples of corporate-sponsored curriculum.**

Thousands of companies, both big and small, market toward children and schools. Scholastic, Pepsi, and General Mills are some of the biggest names that frequently recur throughout the literature. The website Young Minds Inspired, or Youth Marketing International,

has links of examples of different curriculum/lessons they market to schools. It ranges from Preschool to college and includes board games, posters, interactive activities, videos, and more (Lay, n.d.). All of the pictures of the products look extremely bright, fun, and appealing. The description made them sound educational and developmentally appropriate for each grade as well. Google offers many schools with free versions of Google Apps which offers students access to technological resources they might not otherwise have, but also increases the likelihood that these students will continue to use Google products as they get older (Molnar et al., 2011).

‘Channel One’, a short daily news program is shown in thousands of middle school and high schools throughout the country. The news clips are interrupted by 2 minutes of advertisements. Angulo and Green’s study surveyed and interviewed 172 freshman college students on their views of Channel One programming. 90% believed that the advertisements were not harmful to students (Angulo, Green; 2007). The study also sites that about \$2 billion worth of instructional minutes are lost a year due to the viewing of Channel One. The GAO report said that school districts which adopted Channel One claimed that “the benefits of having the technology outweighed any concerns about the commercials” (2000, p. 27). Other districts rejected Channel One, “feeling that advertisements were inappropriate for the classroom” (GAO, 2000, p. 27).

‘ZapMe!’ is a company that installs computers with internet access and a printer into school computer labs. It was founded in 1998 and offers this technology to schools in exchange for having company ads shown on the computer screens and an agreement that computers will be used an average of 4 hours a day (GAO, 2000). Some schools were reluctant to use ZapMe! not only because of the advertisements, but also because of its ability to track students’ usage of the internet (GAO, 2000).

Some companies have created entire programs for schools to use. Pizza Hut has a program called "Book It!" which offers students pizza for meeting their reading goals (Molnar & Morales, 2000). There is also Sylvan Learning Center's Book Adventure. This asks students in grades K-8 to read books and take a 5-10 question quiz at the end in order to receive prizes for discounts or gift certificates to various business like K-Mart or Barnes and Noble (Molnar & Morales, 2000).

Several schools around the nation have agreed to corporate sponsorship due to financial needs. An elementary school in Pennsylvania signed a corporate sponsorship in order to get a gym (Pennsylvania, 2002). Meanwhile McCollum argued in his article that corporations such as Safeway are willing to donate much needed funds to schools in exchange for putting up a sign or naming the scoreboard or building after the corporation. He noted that New York City's board of education is looking to sell advertisement room on school buses and possibly even sports jerseys. The rationale behind it being that students are already bombarded with marketing and it does not impact their learning (McCollum, 2005). Some schools have signed exclusive agreements with companies to only sell their brand on campus or in the district; this primarily affects vending machines (Molnar & Morales, 2000).

Other companies have followed suit and provided instructional materials to schools. For example, Campbell Soup provides science lessons on thickness; Chevron on global warming; McDonalds had students design a restaurant and learn how to apply for a job (Kanner, 2008). McDonalds and PepsiCo have also embraced youth fitness and have offered schools educational materials to schools (Molnar & Garcia, 2006). The magazine *Time for Kids* worked with Ford Motor Company to produce an environmental education kit. All teaching materials carried the Ford logo and almost 90% of teachers sent the magazines home to be read by family members

(Molnar & Morales, 2000). Scholastic, Inc., is widely used throughout school districts. Scholastic partners with corporate sponsors like Shell, American Coal Foundation, Brita, Disney, Microsoft, and Nestle (Molnar et al., 2011). Scholastic's partnership with Shell produced materials about energy sources and listed Shell as a leader in alternative technology (Molnar et al., 2011). The American Coal Foundation produced curriculum for Scholastic about coal, but did not include any disadvantages or negative environmental impacts it has (Molnar et al., 2011). Both partnerships were called into question by advocacy groups and publications of their materials have been discontinued in many areas.

The most extreme measures are the fact that some public schools have been privatized and made into for profit charter schools that are run by companies. Thirty states have laws that allow for profit charter schools to be run by companies (Molnar & Morales, 2000). Companies claim that they can run the school at the same cost per pupil as districts and still make a profit. Edison schools in Texas made this claim and "spent \$4 million on hidden costs involved in Edison's operation of two schools" (Molnar & Morales, 2000, p. 42). Edison schools were also charged with discriminating against minority and special education students in order to inflate test scores (Molnar & Reaves, 2001).

Students are surrounded by corporate involvement starting in Kindergarten and lasting through high school. The GAO study in 2000 found evidence of commercial activity within all schools involved in the study, although the prevalence and intensity of involvement varied. Textbook covers that are offered to students for free are covered with advertisements for clothing, food, and other products (Molnar & Reaves, 2001; GAO, 2000). Eddie Bauer sponsored the National Spelling Bee for 4-8<sup>th</sup> grade students (Molnar & Morales, 2000). Students in Kentucky's Martin County's school store is named after a local convenience store chain and

have a pouring agreement with Pepsi, so students purchase those brands; "...they are preferred because they are familiar. The exclusive agreements with the school thus dissuade students from considering any other possible choice" (Molnar et al., 2011, 13-14).

There has been much discussion about corporate-sponsored vending machines and their nutritional impact, Channel One, or support of athletics; however, research specifically on curriculum is fairly limited because so few people are aware of it. This seems to be especially true of teachers in the workplace. Very few of the articles/books referenced include actual interviews or surveys with current teachers. Most included theoretical observations or discussions with administrators.

### **Chapter 3 Methods**

#### **Introduction**

In order to research the ethical implications of using corporate sponsored curriculum, this study surveyed current classroom teachers on their experience of CSC and solicited their opinions of its use in the classroom of a single public school. This study investigated how teachers at one public school site viewed corporate sponsored curriculum and how it impacted their daily teaching practices. An electronic survey instrument containing 20 questions that teachers could anonymously answer was used for the collection of data for this study.

#### **Sample and Site**

The sample for this study included 13 elementary public school teachers from a single school within the greater Bay Area in Northern California. All of the teachers worked within the same school district and were under the same district employment contract that governed employee rules of conduct and ethics. The teachers ranged from first year teachers to veteran teachers of 18plus years. The school district is located in a suburban area and the teachers who participated worked in a Title-1 school primarily composed of Hispanic (70%) and Caucasian (20%) families. It is situated in a low socioeconomic neighborhood, and relies almost exclusively on district funds (as opposed to supplementing programs/supplies with Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), boosters, or other money). Approximately 78% of the students at the site qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 65% are English Language Learners.

#### **Ethical Standards**

This paper adheres to ethical standards in the treatment of human subjects in research as articulated by the American Psychological Association (2010). Additionally, the research



proposal was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), approved, and assigned number 10284.

Participants were sent an electronic link to a Survey Monkey survey which did not collect any identifying information and, thereby, kept their identities anonymous. District email addresses that were voluntarily disclosed to the researcher were used to send the email with the survey link.

The email addresses have not been recorded in order to maintain confidentiality. Data was recorded in this study as a group so that no participants can be singled out based on their responses.

### **Access and Permissions**

Participants for the study were co-workers of the researcher. The research proposal and survey questions were reviewed and approved by site administration prior to data collection.

Participants were informed about the research project at a staff meeting, and invited to participate via a voluntary, anonymous online survey. The site administrator and all participants confirmed approval and informed voluntary consent for participation respectively, via signed and dated 'Approval and Consent' Forms in hard copy. Sample copies of the respective forms used are included in Appendix A and Appendix B.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

Electronic surveys were sent to all participants. The use of voluntarily disclosed email addresses and an electronic survey was utilized to promote participation since all teachers in the district have an internet connection within their classroom. A survey method, instead of interviews, was used to maximize time efficiency for participants and increase response rates.

Additionally, electronic data collection permitted anonymous aggregation of data for organization and analysis. A copy of the survey instrument is attached in Appendix C.

Survey questions were created based on recurring themes in the literature: types of commercial materials used, the need for using commercial materials, the regulations on commercial materials, and the ethics/effects on students of using commercial materials. Survey questions were developed to ascertain the extent to which teachers use commercial materials in their classrooms and their opinions on the ethics of using such commercial materials. Survey questions had varied response types (yes/no, Likert scale, and open-ended). “Yes/no” questions were used to make teachers take a clear stance on the question; Likert scale questions allowed teachers to show varying degrees of agreement or disagreement; the open ended question allowed teachers to voice their opinions in their own words about teacher use of commercially created products. Questions 1, 2, 14, and 15 asked teachers about their own use of commercial materials in their classroom. Questions 7, 8, and 9 asked teachers about the financial need of using commercial products and if that need justifies their use. Questions 10, 19, and 20 asked teachers about the regulations or review process used on the corporate materials. Questions 3-6, 11-13, and 16-18 asked about the ethics of using commercial materials and the effects its use has on students. Fifty percent of the questions were related to ethics because that is the primary focus of this study. The other focus was on teacher use of those products so that is the next largest question set (25% of the questions).

### **Data Analysis Approach**

Survey data were analyzed by looking for common answers and themes from the aggregated responses. Response percentages were calculated for each question based on the total number of participants responding (for example: 25% chose yes, 75% no). These percentages

and the number of responses for each answer are found in Appendix D “Survey Responses”.

Please note, that some questions have less than 13 responses because teachers were able to skip questions if they felt uncomfortable answering. The percentages revealed the range of teachers’ perspectives on the use of corporate curriculum within the classroom—both similarities as well as differences and outliers.

## Chapter 4 Findings

### Results

All results are reported in percentages. The percentages were based on the total number of responses for the question. Unless otherwise stated, the number of respondents for each question was 13.

#### **Teacher use of commercial materials.**

Out of twelve responses, 75% of teachers reported that they had used corporate sponsored curriculum within their classroom on the first question of this survey. Out of eleven responses, 100% of respondents marked using materials from at least one corporation listed in question 2. Given the option of ten corporations, no teachers who participated in this survey reported using materials from corporations other than Scholastic and Leap Frog. Interestingly, 85% responded that they had never consciously looked for corporate influence within their curriculum prior to this survey. Forty-six percent of the responses indicated that teachers did not use any free resources in their daily teaching, 31% of the responses indicated using it 25% of the time, 15% indicated using it 50% of the time, and 8% indicated using it 75% of the time. The table below shows an exact breakdown of the responses.

1. Have you used corporate sponsored curriculum in your classroom?

Yes	No
9 responses (75%)	3 responses (25%)

2. Mark the companies that you have used materials from within your classroom

- a. Scholastic 11 responses (100%)
- b. Pepsi 0 responses
- c. Leap Frog 4 responses (36%)
- d. Campbell Soup 0 responses
- e. Chevron 0 responses
- f. Channel One 0 responses
- g. Coca-Cola 0 responses
- h. Pizza Hut 0 responses
- i. McDonalds 0 responses
- j. General Mills 0 responses

14. How reliant are you on free resources in your day to day teaching?

0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
6 responses (46%)	4 responses (31%)	2 responses (15%)	1 response (8%)	0 responses (0%)

15. Have you consciously looked for corporate influence within your curriculum or resources?

Yes	No
2 responses (15%)	11 responses (85%)

### **Ethics and effects of teacher use.**

When asked whether teachers should use materials that advertise a product in their classroom, 69% strongly disagreed/disagreed, 31% were neutral, and 0% agreed/strongly agreed. Despite the fact that all teachers used corporate materials, teachers were almost evenly split between whether educational commercial materials were viable instructional materials (58%) or

product placement (42%). Sixteen percent agreed that using materials with familiar products is more engaging for students (53% disagreed/strongly disagreed). When asked if by showing a product to their class, they are endorsing it, 23% strongly disagreed/disagreed, 31% were neutral, and 46% agreed/strongly disagreed.

Teachers were almost evenly split on whether or not using materials provided by a company is ethical (31% strongly disagreed/disagreed, 46% were neutral, and 23% agreed). Teachers were also split on if showing commercial products encourages consumerism (23% strongly disagree/disagree, 54% neutral, 23% strongly agree). The majority of respondents (69%) believed that if children are presented with a commercial product from a trusted adult, they are more likely to buy that brand. Only 16% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed. Sixty-one percent of respondents also disagreed that seeing advertising in the classroom would *not* impact a child's education (23% were neutral and 15% agreed). Despite this, out of 12 responses, 67% of the respondents did not think that teachers should inform parents if they are using commercially sponsored material within their classroom. Sixty-nine percent also believed that teachers could use corporate materials within the classroom without influencing students' views on the brand. See tables below for exact breakdown of the responses.

### 3. Teachers should use commercial materials that advertise a product in their classroom

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
6 responses (46%)	3 responses (23%)	4 responses (31%)	0 responses (0%)	0 responses (0%)

4. Using materials with familiar brands is more engaging for students

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	5 responses (38%)	4 responses (31%)	2 responses (16%)	0 responses (0%)

5. By showing a product to your class, a captive audience, you are endorsing it.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	1 response (8%)	4 responses (31%)	2 responses (15%)	4 responses (31%)

6. Using materials within a classroom provided by a company is ethical.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	3 responses (23%)	6 responses (46%)	3 responses (23%)	0 responses (0%)

11. Showing a commercial product to your students, a captive audience, encourages materialism.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)	7 responses (54%)	0 responses (0%)	3 responses (23%)

12. Students already see so much marketing and advertisements that seeing it in the classroom would not have an impact on their education

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
3 responses (23%)	5 responses (38%)	3 responses (23%)	2 responses (15%)	0 responses (0%)

13. When children see a commercial item presented from a trusted adult, it influences them to purchase that particular brand.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)	6 responses (46%)	3 responses (23%)

16. Should teachers inform parents, the “gatekeepers,” if they are incorporating commercially based resources in their classroom?

Yes	No
4 responses (33%)	8 responses (67%)

17. Are educational commercial materials viable instructional materials or product placement?

Instructional Materials	Product Placement
7 responses (58%)	5 responses (42%)



18. Do you think that a teacher can use corporate materials within the classroom without influencing students' views on the brand/company?

Yes	No
9 responses (69%)	4 responses (31%)

### **Financial need for commercial materials.**

When looking at potential corporate influence on the school as a whole, 53% of the responses indicated that teachers disagree that financial support for athletic/extracurricular activities justifies having a company's sign on campus; however, teachers were split on whether naming a new building after a company was worthy of getting a new building from a company (31% strongly disagreed/disagreed, 38% neutral, 30% agreed/strongly agreed). Ninety-two percent of the respondents reported that they are neutral or rely on free materials that the district is unable to provide (only 8% strongly disagreed). See tables below for full breakdown of the responses.

7. Using free resources from a company provides materials for your class that your school district cannot financially support.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	0 responses (0%)	6 responses (46%)	2 responses (15%)	4 responses (31%)

8. Donated money from companies to support athletics or extracurricular activities justifies having a company's sign on the school's campus

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	5 responses (38%)	3 responses (23%)	1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)

9. It is better to have a new/upgraded building named after a company than to stick with the old building

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	3 responses (23%)	5 responses (38%)	2 responses (15%)	2 responses (15%)

### **Regulations and review of materials.**

Forty-six percent of participants reported that they agree/strongly agree that they use a set protocol when reviewing new material and resources. The other 54% of the responses disagreed or were neutral. Out of 12 responses, 83% of the respondents thought that there should be set guidelines for teacher use of commercial materials within the classroom. See tables below for responses.

10. There is a set protocol that you use as a teacher when reviewing new material/resources

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
0 responses (0%)	3 responses (23%)	4 responses (31%)	3 responses (23%)	3 responses (23%)

19. Do you feel it's important for there to be guidelines for teacher use of commercial materials in the classroom?

Yes	No
10 responses (83%)	2 responses (17%)

Ten responses to question 20 (open-ended) resulted in the following recommendations for teacher use of commercially created products:

- Teachers should not outright endorse a product.
- To ensure that teachers are aware of which products are commercially created and any bias corporate agenda. I'd also recommend that teachers inform students of potential bias and discuss alternate ideas so students begin to think critically about issues and examine sources.
- Not to use...
- Environmental print for the lower grades.
- Be cautious as with anything you are introducing in the classroom.
- Just don't hype up the brand name. Instead, focus on what the product does to promote learning. Use the products to teach skills and standards, but don't go into a sales pitch about the product. If students focus on the brand and "getting it" or "needing" to have it, discuss the pros and cons of such thinking or pressure with them. Help them understand the pitfalls of materialism, and teach them to be grateful for things they have which others do not. Also, help them to understand that they must work hard to acquire things in this life. Nothing is really free. Also, help students to understand that while it's great to

acquire things, there are other sources of happiness. Teachers should use careful consideration of how they use commercially created products and how they present them to their students.

- I think there should be some kind of review of the materials before they are used. The district should have policies in place.
- If you think the product is a good idea, maybe you could make something similar but without the logo. I know it's more work, but... I feel that these companies are trying to get "good guy" cred for supporting education - and maybe they are - but this is symptomatic of a larger societal problem. If schools provided everything needed for education (read: if, as a society, we placed a higher value on education), this argument would look a lot different.
- make sure it isn't biased [sic]
- Guidelines, via CDE, or School District would be great, but I doubt either would move on that front, for risk of some possible backlash.

See Appendix D, 'Survey Responses' for a full break down of all survey questions responses.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The data revealed that all 13 respondents tended to have a negative view on the use of corporate sponsored curriculum within the classroom. Overall, responses revealed a limited knowledge and understanding of corporate materials and its influence within the classroom. Only 15% of respondents acknowledged that they had looked for corporate influence within curriculum or resources, and 46% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed when asked if they use a set protocol to review new material and resources. This aligns with the literature that teachers are not fully aware of commercial products or their effects. The fact that less than half

of participants in the study use some protocol to review new material and resources, speaks to the fact that there is little regulation on commercial products. Teachers do not have strong guidelines to follow when trying to supplement their curriculum. District policies vary on commercial product use, and based on the responses, it does not seem that the district where the teachers work has a review protocol that teachers follow. In the open-ended response question about teacher use of commercial products, two teachers mentioned the need for a review process being put in place either by the district or CDE. When asked if there should be set protocol to follow, 83% of respondents agreed. One teacher pointed out that the lack of resources is a systematic issue. If educators had the necessary materials provided, then commercial products in the classroom would not be necessary or as prevalent.

Teacher responses revealed caution about the use and effects of using commercial products in a classroom. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents disagreed that teachers should use materials that advertise a product in their classroom. When asked if it is ethical to use materials provided by a company, 31% disagreed and 46% were neutral. The neutral responses can be interpreted as teachers who feel it is ethically neutral to use those products, or teachers who are not sure if it is ethical or not. The fact that only 23% of the respondents agreed that using commercial materials was ethical, is aligned with the existent literature. Schor, Molnar, Kanner, Consumers, GAO, and other authors, all pointed to the ethical dilemma using commercial products creates. Forty-six percent of the responses agreed with Schor, Molnar, and Consumers Union that if a teacher shows students a product, the teacher is endorsing it. Sixty-one percent of the responses disagreed using the argument that students generally see so much marketing and advertising that seeing it in the classroom would not affect their education. Sixty-nine percent also agreed that if children see items presented from a trusted adult, it

influences them to buy it. This is what Schor explained: that students are a captive audience and teachers are a trusted authority who can influence the purchasing and materialistic mindset of students by presenting commercial materials in the classroom (2004).

Campbell warned that teachers are a trusted, authority figure whose actions yield ethical and moral lessons to students—even if the teacher does not realize it (2003). Overall the responses revealed a lack of understanding the potential effects of using corporate materials in the classroom. Fifty-four percent of the respondents were neutral to the idea that ‘showing commercial products to their students encourages materialism’. The literature showed a strong correlation between the use of commercial materials and materialistic views of students, but the teachers in the study did not seem aware of this fact. Almost half (46%) of the respondents were also neutral to the idea that ‘using materials provided by a company is ethical’. This is clearly the issue at hand, and teachers who participated in this study did not seem to have a clear position on this issue. The literature explored the notion of whether commercial materials can be considered as viable instructional materials or are product placements. Teacher respondents were split on this issue: 58% said viable instructional materials and 42% said product placement. This is a grey area and without strong national, state, or district guidelines to regulate the use of commercially sourced materials, its implementation as instructional or product placement would vary greatly from teacher to teacher.

McCollum and one school in Pennsylvania both asserted the financial need for schools to partner with companies. Teacher responses seemed to acknowledge this, but did not show clear favoritism for using corporate sponsorship for financial reasons. Forty-six percent of the respondents agreed that using commercial products that the school district cannot afford is acceptable. Forty-six percent were also neutral on that question. Responses were almost evenly

split between disagreement, neutral, and agreement on the question of whether donated money from a company justifies having their sign on campus or having a new building named after a company is better than sticking with the old building.

8. Donated money from companies to support athletics or extracurricular activities justifies having a company's sign on the school's campus

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	5 responses (38%)	3 responses (23%)	1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)

9. It is better to have a new/upgraded building named after a company than to stick with the old building

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	3 responses (23%)	5 responses (38%)	2 responses (15%)	2 responses (15%)

This split mirrored the split seen in the literature between viewpoints on whether financial support from companies justifies having their signs, logos and influence on-campus.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The primary research questions for this study were: 1) What is teachers' knowledge of CSC? 2) How much of their teaching materials include CSC? 3) What are teachers' ethical dispositions on the use of CSC? The overall findings are as follows: 1) The data collected from this study indicated that teachers have a limited amount of knowledge CSC, especially regarding its potential impact on students and ethical implications. Eighty-six percent indicated that they had never consciously looked for corporate influence within their curriculum or resources. 2) One hundred percent of responses indicated that they used materials from at least one company; however, 46% indicated that they do not rely at all on CSC for their day to day teaching. 3) Only 23% of survey responses agreed that using materials provided by a company is ethical (46% of responses were neutral, 31% disagreed). Teacher responses were mixed and did not reveal a clear ethical decision regarding their ethical disposition on the use of CSC in the public school setting.

Corporate involvement in public education is a gray ethical area. Both the literature and participant responses from this study revealed the complexity of the issue. Financial need and a lack of resources have pushed many schools and teachers to utilize commercial materials. Overall, the message is clear though: the use of commercial materials in classrooms have numerous underlying effects on students. Many teachers, including the participants in this study, are not fully aware of the potential impact using CSC can have on their students. It can encourage materialism, brand loyalty, and corporate interests, rather than the educational lessons the materials claim to hold. The new Common Core State Standards put an emphasis on developing critical thinking skills in students. This is an admirable goal, but commercial materials are not designed to encourage critical thinking—like why an oil company is sponsoring



environmental curriculum to a school. Unless teachers are more informed and aware of the commercial interests embedded in these materials, how are they going to teach students to look at it with a critical eye? Without strong federal, state, or local regulations on commercial materials, teachers need to be able to vet incoming resources and use their own critical thinking skills before presenting the material to their students.

### **Recommendations**

Teachers need to become aware of the fact that commercial materials are present within their schools and classrooms. Professional development outlining what commercial materials are and their potential effects on students is strongly recommended. Identifying that it is an issue, will lead to discourse at a school site about the ethical responsibility teachers have in using the materials. School districts, and/or individual schools developing a protocol or checklist to use when reviewing CSC materials is also recommended. There were no premade protocols found within the literature used in this study, so school sites could create their own when having discussions about the ethical responsibility of teachers. The following are some suggested questions the researcher developed based on this study:

1. Where does this material come from?
2. What interest might this company have in education?
3. Are there any logos, brand names, or pictures of products in the material?
4. Does this material cover all angles of the topic or are gaps present?
5. How might students react to this material?

Ideally, stronger local, state, and federal laws regarding corporate involvement in public education need to be developed. Until then, teachers need to be diligent about reviewing and considering the materials they present to their students.

Given the adoption of the Common Core standards and the emphasis on critical thinking skills, teachers must hone their own critical thinking skills and assess the impact of bringing commercial materials into their classrooms. Teachers can use commercial materials as pieces of evidence for students to examine critically—looking for bias, inaccuracies, and gaps. Commercial materials can be used to teach students about how companies advertise to target groups, and to teach media literacy. In order to teach media literacy and these critical thinking skills, teachers must first refine their own skills and become informed about the potential impact bringing commercial materials into the classroom has.

### **Limitations/Gaps in the Study**

This research consisted of a very small sample size that included only one school site. The results from the teacher surveys can only be used as a case study, and should not be used to draw broad conclusions from. A larger sample size, including educators from different sites, grade levels, and districts would yield more generalizable results. The participants in this study also all worked at a low socioeconomic, Title-1 school. This socioeconomic need would not necessarily reflect the opinions of teachers working in a more affluent area. These educators also did not report using materials from most of the corporations listed. Having participants who have been exposed to/used more corporate sponsored materials might also yield different results.

### **Overall Significance of the Study**

This study allowed me as a research to find out what the view of my colleagues are on commercial materials, and start a discussion about it at my site. The study also permitted me to suggest possible solutions to the issue at my site. Considering that very few previous studies and literature have included the opinions of teachers, this study brings their opinions into the

spotlight. It can be a first step toward future research that includes more teachers' opinions and looks at this topic with a wider scope.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The results of this study showed that teachers had a lack of knowledge and understanding of corporate influence within classrooms. To extend this study, more schools of varying grade levels, districts, and socioeconomic statuses should be surveyed. This study could also be extended to district level staff to see what their level of awareness/knowledge is, and what is being done at the district level to address it. A formal protocol to review commercial materials could also be proposed and utilized within a district to compare the usage of commercial materials and teachers perspectives.

### **About the Author**

The author is an elementary school teacher in the greater Bay Area in Northern California. She completed her multiple subject, mathematics single subject, and mild to moderate education specialist credentials at Dominican University of California.

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## Appendix A

## CONSENT FORM PRINCIPAL/AGENCY APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STUDY

Principal

Dear Principal,

1. I am requesting your approval to conduct surveys with current teachers at John Reed Elementary School. This research is part of the effort of Laura Lightfoot to raise awareness and gain information from the teacher perspective about the effects of using corporate sponsored curriculum within the classroom.
2. I understand that allowing teachers engaged in the research process the opportunity to participate involves volunteers taking part in a survey, which will include questions about their use and perspectives on corporate sponsored curriculum and its effects on students.
3. I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that teachers are free to withdraw participation at any time.
4. Responses to the survey will be analyzed for themes. Only the researcher and her advisor will see analysis. One year after the completion of the research, all written materials will be destroyed.
5. Data will be collected via responses to Survey Monkey in an effort to evaluate teachers' perspectives on the ethics of using corporate sponsored materials within the classroom.
6. I am aware that all study participants will be furnished with a written summary of the relevant findings and conclusions of this project. Such results will not be available until June 1, 2015.
7. I understand that if the principal or participants have any further questions about the study, I/they may contact at Dr. Madalienne Peters 415-485-3285. If I/ participants have any further questions or comments about participation in this study, I/they may contact the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. Participants may reach the IRBPHS Office by calling (415) 482-3547 and leaving a voicemail message, by FAX at (415) 257-0165 by writing to the IRBPHS, Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dominican University of California, 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901.
8. All procedures related to this research project have been satisfactorily explained to me prior to my permission to allow the researchers to ask for teacher participation.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE ABOVE EXPLANATION REGARDING THIS STUDY. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE. A COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

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Signature

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Date

## Appendix B

## CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHER PARTICIPATION

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
CONSENT FORM TO ACT AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/TEACHER

1. I understand that I am being asked to participate as a subject in a research study that explores my perceptions of the effects of using corporate sponsored curriculum within the classroom. I agree to participate in a 5-10 minute survey where I will respond to questions on the implications of using corporate sponsored curriculum. This research project is being supervised by Laura Lightfoot and advised by Madalienne Peters, Ed.D.
2. I understand that participation in this research will involve taking part in a 5-10 minute survey, which will include my opinions on the use of corporate sponsored curriculum within the classroom.
3. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.
4. Only the researcher and her advisor will see the results of the survey. One year after the completion of the research, all written materials will be destroyed.
5. I am aware that all study participants will be furnished with a written summary of the relevant findings and conclusions of this project. Such results will not be available until June 1, 2015.
6. I understand that I will be discussing topics of a professional nature and that I may refuse to answer any question that causes me distress or seems an invasion of my privacy. I may elect to stop the survey at any time.
7. I understand that if I have any further questions about the study, I may contact Madalienne Peters at 415-485-3285 Dominican University of California. If I have any further questions or comments about participation in this study, I may contact the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS Office by calling (415) 482-3547 and leaving a voicemail message, by FAX at (415) 257-0165 by writing to the IRBPHS, Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dominican University of California, 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901.
8. All procedures related to this research project have been satisfactorily explained to me prior to my voluntary election to participate.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE ABOVE EXPLANATION REGARDING THIS STUDY. I VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE. A COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

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Signature

---

Date

Appendix C  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview. Your professional knowledge and opinions are important to me. I appreciate your involvement in this topic that I feel so passionate about. I look forward to using your insights while completing my master's thesis on the ethics and effects of using corporate sponsored curriculum within the classroom.

**Survey Questions**

1. Have you used corporate sponsored curriculum in your classroom?  

Yes                      No
  
2. Mark the companies that you have used materials from within your classroom
  - a. Scholastic
  - b. Pepsi
  - c. Leap Frog
  - d. Campbell Soup
  - e. Chevron
  - f. Channel One
  - g. Coca-Cola
  - h. Pizza Hut
  - i. McDonalds
  - j. General Mills

Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 of how you feel about the following statements. 1 being strongly disagree, 3 neutral, and 5 strongly agree.

3. Teachers should use commercial materials that advertise a product in their classroom
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree



4. Using materials with familiar brands is more engaging for students
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
5. By showing a product to your class, a captive audience, you are endorsing it.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
6. Using materials within a classroom provided by a company is ethical.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
7. Using free resources from a company provides materials for your class that your school district cannot financially support.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
8. Donated money from companies to support athletics or extracurricular activities justifies having a company's sign on the school's campus
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
9. It is better to have a new/upgraded building named after a company than to stick with the old building
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
10. There is a set protocol that you use as a teacher when reviewing new material/resources
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
11. Showing a commercial product to your students, a captive audience, encourages materialism.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
12. Students already see so much marketing and advertisements that seeing it in the classroom would not have an impact on their education
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neutral
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree



Appendix D  
SURVEY RESPONSES

1. Have you used corporate sponsored curriculum in your classroom?

Yes	No
9 responses (75%)	3 responses (25%)

2. Mark the companies that you have used materials from within your classroom

- a. Scholastic      11 responses (100%)
- b. Pepsi            0 responses
- c. Leap Frog        4 responses (36%)
- d. Campbell Soup 0 responses
- e. Chevron          0 responses
- f. Channel One    0 responses
- g. Coca-Cola        0 responses
- h. Pizza Hut        0 responses
- i. McDonalds      0 responses
- j. General Mills    0 responses

Rate on a scale of 1 to 5 of how you feel about the following statements. 1 being strongly disagree, 3 neutral, and 5 strongly agree.

3. Teachers should use commercial materials that advertise a product in their classroom

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
6 responses (46%)	3 responses (23%)	4 responses (31%)	0 responses (0%)	0 responses (0%)

4. Using materials with familiar brands is more engaging for students

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	5 responses (38%)	4 responses (31%)	2 responses (16%)	0 responses (0%)

5. By showing a product to your class, a captive audience, you are endorsing it.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	1 response (8%)	4 responses (31%)	2 responses (15%)	4 responses (31%)

6. Using materials within a classroom provided by a company is ethical.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	3 responses (23%)	6 responses (46%)	3 responses (23%)	0 responses (0%)

7. Using free resources from a company provides materials for your class that your school district cannot financially support.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	0 responses (0%)	6 responses (46%)	2 responses (15%)	4 responses (31%)

8. Donated money from companies to support athletics or extracurricular activities justifies having a company's sign on the school's campus

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
2 responses (15%)	5 responses (38%)	3 responses (23%)	1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)

9. It is better to have a new/upgraded building named after a company than to stick with the old building

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	3 responses (23%)	5 responses (38%)	2 responses (15%)	2 responses (15%)

10. There is a set protocol that you use as a teacher when reviewing new material/resources

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
0 responses (0%)	3 responses (23%)	4 responses (31%)	3 responses (23%)	3 responses (23%)

11. Showing a commercial product to your students, a captive audience, encourages materialism.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)	7 responses (54%)	0 responses (0%)	3 responses (23%)

12. Students already see so much marketing and advertisements that seeing it in the classroom would not have an impact on their education

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
3 responses (23%)	5 responses (38%)	3 responses (23%)	2 responses (15%)	0 responses (0%)

13. When children see a commercial item presented from a trusted adult, it influences them to purchase that particular brand.

1. Strongly disagree	2. disagree	3. neutral	4. agree	5. strongly agree
1 response (8%)	1 response (8%)	2 responses (15%)	6 responses (46%)	3 responses (23%)

14. How reliant are you on free resources in your day to day teaching?

0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
6 responses (46%)	4 responses (31%)	2 responses (15%)	1 response (8%)	0 responses (0%)

15. Have you consciously looked for corporate influence within your curriculum or resources?

Yes	No
2 responses (15%)	11 responses (85%)

16. Should teachers inform parents, the “gatekeepers,” if they are incorporating commercially based resources in their classroom?

Yes	No
4 responses (33%)	8 responses (67%)

17. Are educational commercial materials viable instructional materials or product placement?

Instructional Materials	Product Placement
7 responses (58%)	5 responses (42%)

18. Do you think that a teacher can use corporate materials within the classroom without influencing students’ views on the brand/company?

Yes	No
9 responses (69%)	4 responses (31%)

19. Do you feel it’s important for there to be guidelines for teacher use of commercial materials in the classroom?

Yes	No
10 responses (83%)	2 responses (17%)

20. What recommendations do you have for teacher use of commercially created products?

- Teachers should not outright endorse a product.
- To ensure that teachers are aware of which products are commercially created and any bias corporate agenda. I'd also recommend that teachers inform students of

potential bias and discuss alternate ideas so students begin to think critically about issues and examine sources.

- Not to use...
- Environmental print for the lower grades.
- Be cautious as with anything you are introducing in the classroom.
- Just don't hype up the brand name. Instead, focus on what the product does to promote learning. Use the products to teach skills and standards, but don't go into a sales pitch about the product. If students focus on the brand and "getting it" or "needing" to have it, discuss the pros and cons of such thinking or pressure with them. Help them understand the pitfalls of materialism, and teach them to be grateful for things they have which others do not. Also, help them to understand that they must work hard to acquire things in this life. Nothing is really free. Also, help students to understand that while it's great to acquire things, there are other sources of happiness. Teachers should use careful consideration of how they use commercially created products and how they present them to their students.
- I think there should be some kind of review of the materials before they are used. The district should have policies in place.
- If you think the product is a good idea, maybe you could make something similar but without the logo. I know it's more work, but... I feel that these companies are trying to get "good guy" cred for supporting education - and maybe they are - but this is symptomatic of a larger societal problem. If schools provided everything needed for education (read: if, as a society, we placed a higher value on education), this argument would look a lot different.



- make sure it isn't bias
- Guidelines, via CDE, or School District would be great, but I doubt either would move on that front, for risk of some possible backlash.