

## Open Letter from Educators

Dear CEO Easterbrook,

As teachers, school support staff, principals, school nurses, and advocates dedicated to the education and well-being of children, we urge you to end the exploitative practice of McTeacher's Nights.

On McTeacher's Nights, teachers "work" at a local McDonald's in hopes of raising much-needed funds for their schools. Parents and children are encouraged to eat at McDonald's so they can see "their very own educators serve up hamburgers, fries and shakes."<sup>1</sup>

It is wrong to enlist teachers to sell kids on a brand like McDonald's whose core products are burgers, fries, and soda. Marketing junk food to children is a harmful practice. We are in the midst of the largest preventable health crisis in the U.S.—one that is spreading throughout the world, and that increasingly affects children. If this trend is not reversed, many children will be burdened with diet-related diseases like obesity and Type 2 diabetes, affecting their health for life.

Health professionals on the front lines of treating these diseases have long urged you to stop targeting children. The World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend restrictions on junk food marketing to children.<sup>2, 3</sup> Study after study from esteemed organizations such as the Institute of Medicine and the National Bureau of Economic Research suggest that junk food marketing targeted at kids is a serious health concern.<sup>4, 5</sup>

McTeacher's Nights undermine these important efforts, exploiting educators' authority and popularity to lure kids to McDonald's. Transforming teachers into McDonald's marketers is

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<sup>1</sup> "In Your Community: McTeacher's Night," *McDonald's Educates*, <http://www.mcdonaldseducates.com/mcedu.html> (accessed March 11, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> "Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children," *World Health Organization*, 2010, [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241500210\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241500210_eng.pdf) (accessed March 11, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Committee on Communications, "Children, Adolescents, and Advertising," *Pediatrics* 95, no. 2 (February 1, 1995), 295–97, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/95/2/295> (accessed August 13, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Chou et al., "Fast-Food Restaurant Advertising on Television and its Influence on Childhood Obesity," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, December 2005, [http://www.nber.org/papers/w11879.pdf?new\\_window=1](http://www.nber.org/papers/w11879.pdf?new_window=1) (accessed August 14, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Dan Glickman et al., "Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation," *Institute of Medicine of the National Academies*, 2012, <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention.aspx> (accessed February 26, 2015).



Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood



particularly egregious in light of a recent study in *Clinical Pediatrics* linking fast food consumption with lower educational outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

What's worse, this is merely one of many tactics McDonald's uses to market junk food to children in schools. From serving up branded fast food in school cafeterias to sending its corporate mascot into schools to "teach" everything from physical activity to healthy eating,<sup>7</sup> McDonald's has actively contributed to the degradation of the school food environment in communities across the country. These tactics have a devastating impact on children's health, especially in communities that already see disproportionately high rates of diet-related disease.

Children deserve special protection, especially in schools. That's why First Lady Michelle Obama and the United States Department of Agriculture took action to curb school-based marketing of unhealthy food.<sup>8</sup>

McTeacher's Nights negate the good work of educators to create healthy food habits and environments in schools. Parents and children trust us to make decisions based on what's best for our students. Using teachers to market anything to children undermines that trust. But given the dire health consequences, promoting any fast food brand is especially unconscionable. Educators should not have to choose between school resources today and the health of our students tomorrow.

This is the moment for action. In your first year as CEO, it is finally time to end your corporation's abusive practice of using teachers and educational institutions to promote McDonald's to schoolchildren.

The health of current and future generations of children will benefit from your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly M. Purtell, et al., "Fast Food Consumption and Academic Growth in Late Childhood," *Clinical Pediatrics*, December 5, 2014, <http://cpj.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/12/04/0009922814561742.full.pdf+html> (accessed February 26, 2015)

<sup>7</sup> "In Your Community: Ronald McDonald," *McDonald's Educates*, <http://www.mcdonaldseducates.com/ronald.html> (accessed March 11, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Office of the First Lady, "The White House and USDA announce School Wellness Standards," Press Release, February 25, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/25/white-house-and-usda-announce-school-wellness-standards> (accessed February 26, 2015)

## Teachers Unions

National Education Association  
National Education Association Healthy Futures

AFT Michigan  
AFT Missouri  
AFT New Jersey  
AFT Oklahoma  
AFT Pennsylvania  
AFT Utah  
AFT Vermont  
AFT West Virginia  
California Federation of Teachers  
California Teachers Association  
Connecticut State Vocational Federation of Teachers  
Florida Education Association  
Georgia Federation of Teachers  
Ohio Federation of Teachers  
Vermont National Education Association  
Virginia Education Association  
West Virginia Association of School Nurses

Albuquerque Teachers Federation  
Allegany County Education Association  
Amsterdam Teachers Association  
Arlington Education Association (Massachusetts)  
Arlington Education Association (Virginia)  
Atlanta Federation of Teachers  
Birmingham AFT  
Boston Teachers Union  
Brookline Educators Union  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Association of Educators  
Chicago Teachers Union  
Cleveland Teachers Union, Local 279  
District Twelve Education Association  
Exeter West Greenwich Teachers Association  
Fairfax Education Association



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Fremont Education Association  
Grand Rapids Education Association  
Green Bay Education Association  
Holliston Federation of Teachers  
Houston Federation of Teachers  
Jefferson Elementary Federation of Teachers  
Madison Teachers Inc.  
Metropolitan Nashville Education Association  
Milwaukee Teachers Education Association  
Montgomery County Federation of Teachers  
Moore Association of Classroom Teachers  
Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers  
Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers  
Pittsfield Federation of School Employees  
Red River United, AFT Local 4995  
Saint Paul Federation of Teachers  
Salt Lake Federation of Teachers  
Savannah Federation of Teachers  
School District 14 Classroom Teachers Association  
Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals  
Tiverton Teachers Association  
Toledo Federation of Teachers  
United Teachers Los Angeles  
United Teachers of Santa Clara

## **Education Advocates**

### **Organizations**

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood  
Corporate Accountability International  
  
Citizens for Public Schools  
Class Size Matters  
Defending the Early Years  
Educational Studies Department of Colgate University  
Engaging Schools  
Healthy School Food Maryland  
Movement of Rank & File Educators (MORE)



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New York State Foundations of Education Association  
North Country Alliance for Public Education  
NYS Allies for Public Education  
Obligation, Inc  
Oneonta Area for Public Education  
Parents 4 Teachers  
Parents Across America  
Peace Educators Allied for Children Everywhere  
Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools (PCAPS)  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Public Schools First NC  
Real Food for Kids – Montgomery County  
Rethinking Schools  
Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment

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