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Sierra High School School-wide Writing Sample. March 20, 2002

Prompt A. Writing Situation:

In recent years, public schools in California have had to come up with creative ways to supplement declining budgets in order to provide for so-called “extras” for their students: scoreboards, food for school-sponsored events, and t-shirts, among other things. One solution to this problem has been provided by the possibility to create partnerships with sponsoring companies. Several schools in the valley have contracts with companies like Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola, who, in exchange for being able to market their products exclusively to the students, give the schools some of the profits. Sierra High School, for instance, has an agreement with Pepsi Cola.

At Sierra High, we are provided with free vending machines, and the substantial monies made from this agreement are put into the ASB fund, and used for student activities. Our marquee out front was also funded by Pepsi. Roosevelt High School, in its second year of a partnership with Pepsi, also receives free vending machines, and free soda for events. And they also recently bought a marquee for their auditorium, at a cost of over \$100,000, a sum they would not have been able to afford otherwise.

There are some schools that have decided to reject this method of bringing in extra funds, citing good nutrition as their motivation. These schools do not sell chips, sodas, or candy. Their philosophy reflects the wish to model better nutritional practices. And indeed, many studies show that students perform poorly when fed a diet of sweet food and drinks. Childhood obesity and diabetes are on the rise. Edie Jessup, of the Hunger and Nutrition Project, says, “Schools, in their misdirected good intentions, create these partnerships out of need for money for the students, then ignore the science that states that these products are bad for them.”

Writing Directions:

You are a student at a school where such an exclusive agreement with a soda company has been proposed, and you have been asked to be a teen representative on a task force considering this proposal. Write a persuasive essay explaining your position on this issue.

In your essay, define and explain what you believe is the issue in this situation, and state your position on it. You should support your position with two or more arguments. Support your arguments with reasons, examples, opinions, incidents from your own experience, or any other evidence you can think of. Remember that there are those who will disagree with you. Anticipate at least one argument against your position, and answer that argument. Present the strongest reasons you can for your position, and answer that argument. Present the strongest reasons you can for your position in order to persuade others to agree with you. Your essay is limited to both sides of one sheet of lined paper, and must be written in dark blue or black ink.

Your essay will be scored with regards to the following:

Staying on topic and writing to the instructions in the Writing Directions.

Making your position clear and using sufficient reasoning to support that position

Giving a clear explanation and using specific examples and details

Organization of ideas

Style: sentence variety and vocabulary usage

Mechanics/conventions: sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, paragraphing, capitalization, usage

Hint: A well-written essay usually has a minimum of 5 paragraphs with at least 3 sentences each.

**The following essays are from the School Wide Writing Prompt at Sierra High School, March 20, 2002
Thank you to Natalie Maxwell, teacher, and Principal and Students for seriously considering an
important Health Topic.**

Essay 1)

Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola are household brand names the public sees every day advertised in one form or another. These large companies help less fortunate schools enjoy activities they would not have an opportunity to enjoy, by creating partnerships. Partnerships that give practically all benefits to the school.

Smaller schools struggle with the fact of low income. Activities directors and higher officials keep it in the students best interest to enjoy the years spent at school by entertaining them with events and funding school sports that may get expensive. Larger schools with sufficient funding don't really have that problem. Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola offer an alternative to smaller schools to help with certain costs needed to fund events.

Some may argue that the bombardment of soda companies affect the nutrition of students. Sierra High offered soda's before the vending machines arrived. Not to mention sodas are not the only drink offered in the vending machine, there are also fruit drinks and water. Milk and other drinks are offered at the, so a student is not bombarded with only and unhealthy decision. Another fact to consider is some students like me, don't even like soda!

School funding from large corporations such as Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola help students enjoy activities and school events that might not be offered because of income. The fact that these companies market to children students is beside the point. Students are marketed to outside of school and in the world around them. There is no escaping it. Letting a large company enrich the schools ability to provide an everlasting memory to a student is priceless.

By: Christine Flutter, grade 11, Nagel, Social Studies

Essay 2)

Should Sierra High School (SHS) sell itself for extra money? Schools across the country are attempting to come up with better ways to get money for schools "extras" (scoreboards, T-shirts, rallies, etc.) so student moral is raised. One way schools have found is to have soda (or carbonated drinks) be sold on campus and gain a certain percentage of the profits. This partnership between schools and soda companies has been highly debated, and probably will be forever. Soda companies should not sell on campuses because student nutrition and teaching dictate otherwise.

Schools are a representation of today's youth and what will be tomorrow's adults. By selling sodas on campus, it teaches students that something that is bad for a person is good. It has been found that soda is in fact horrible on a person growing and causes obesity and mal-nutrition. By schools selling soda products on campus, it teaches students that it is okay to drink them.

Growing teens need a good diet with very little sugar and carbohydrates. Teens produce these themselves and it is not necessary to drink soda to refill those two items. Soda can take away more from a person than give to a person. Carbonated drinks have lead me into a pothole. For a long time, I drank a soda a day, then I decided to stop. This move

improved my nutrition ten fold allowing me to be more active and healthy. Also, right after I came off of soda, I had massive headaches and head aches for about two weeks afterwards from the lack of caffeine (like a drug, it became a part of my system).

It is true that some would say that the money brought in by soda far out weighs the cost to today's youth. That statement alone contradicts itself. The objective of a school is teach children and young adults about what is healthy and good for a person to survive. Schools should not sell a product that causes so many youth into nutritional problems just to make a profit.

Schools of today need money, but not at the expense of the students. A students...of the school, and the out war...should outweigh a profit for extra needs. Schools...and caring; and so, if a school...causes mal-nutrition, then it is not...student they are attempting to tea...and values.

By: Robert Peabody III, Gradeill, Weinburger/Music

Essay 3)

Having corporations, such as cola companies, sponsor schools is a bad idea. It is immoral. Not only are schools "selling-out," but they aren't teaching students about proper nutrition.

Millions of students across America eat their lunch at school. Everyday, these students consume massive amounts of soda, chips, candy, and other junk food. Cola companies that sponsor schools only worsen this problem, they encourage poor nutrition. Studies show that students with poor nutrition perform poorly. A school is an institute of leaning, why wouldn't they want students to learn to the best of their abilities?

Some may say that soda and junk food is what students want, and without a sponsorship, they would eat those foods anyways. Why not make some money off of this. The schools should not be concerned with that. In fact, healthy foods and drinks are not only what they need, but what they and as well.

Several months ago our school newspaper took a poll among the students, and a great many requested that our school have more fresh foods, like salads, and fruits.

If schools cared about the good nutrition and well being of students, then they wouldn't sell-out to major soda companies. Sacrificing student's health for extra money is not an ethical practice. There are other methods of making money, like fundraisers, which are healthier options.

Lack of good nutrition, and obese students are two things that far out-weigh the gains in profit from students. Schools should teach students not only about academics, but about healthy living. A dollar sign cannot be put on the health of future Americans.

By: Melissa McAteer

Essay 4)

In recent years, public schools in California have had to come up with creative ways to supplement declining budgets in order to provide “extras” for their students. These “extras” may include food for school activities, scoreboards, or T-shirts. One way that schools are providing this extra money is through the use of a partnership with sponsoring companies. Many times these companies provide soda or snack machines and give the profits to the school for marketing their products to students. It is my opinion that although these machines may provide funding, their presence does more harm than good.

In today’s society, most of the population views obesity as unacceptable. In fact, more than half of all movie stars and models, who serve as role models to younger children, are so far under their ideal weight that they are no longer healthy. High School is supposed to prepare students for the “real world,” but how are we prepared to face the critics if we are not taught to maintain a healthy lifestyle? By placing vending machines around the campus and selling chips, soda and candy, our high school is promoting an unhealthy lifestyle rather than a healthy one.

Many studies have shown that students perform poorly when fed a diet consisting of sweet foods and drinks. Is it not the goal of all faculty to improve students performance? How do they expect to do this when everywhere we turn there is a vending machine just waiting to spit out a Pepsi or provide a quick sugar high?

On the other hand, these machines provide money to buy things that some schools otherwise can’t afford. But, there are many healthy ways to fund school activities. There are several fund-raising activities that can include the whole student body and bring in enough money to buy those “extras.”

While partnerships with sponsoring companies are beneficial, they accompany too many harmful aspects. High school is an institution of learning and a healthy diet is a necessity. I urge all students as well as staff members to reevaluate the many risks that come with using vending machines to make a profit, because they outweigh the benefits.

By: Ashley Baker, 12th grade, Mrs, Beechinor, Agriculture

Essay 5)

I am sick and tired of drinking Vitasoy and buttermilk! When lunchtime comes around at my high school the students have a choice of what beverage they would like to accompany their food. It is either Vitasoy, buttermilk, or water. What the real choice comes down to is whether the student wants to gag, upchuck, or go to their next class with an empty stomach. My high school does not serve food or drinks that they consider to be “bad” for the students. There are no soda, Doritos, or snicker bars on campus. The very food that children grow up on my school has tyrannically seized.

The concrete issue here is that schools have their own misconceptions that they’re number one priority is to promote healthy food rather than raise money for the school. If they created a partnership with a major company such as Pepsi-Cola, the school could raise funds that could alleviate many problems that the school could acquire. Problems such as lack of technology, run-down facilities, and teacher salaries. Raising money would be much more beneficial than just regulating what students eat just so the school could put up a sign at the entrance to their campus saying, “this is a Drug, Alcohol, and Sugar free zone.” How much could a Pepsi at lunch affect a student’s performance in the classroom? The opinion of the

student body is staggering. There have been talks of mutiny, boycotts of the school, even a massive emigration, leaving our school barren and desolate.

Certain parents and school officials might claim that serving healthy food is beneficial to the students. Parents can't monitor what their kids eat and the kids might just eat jolly ranchers all day. If this is the case then the parent should make their kid a lunch at home and send it to school with them.

The bottom line is that the students need a choice, an alternative...keep Vitasoy and buttermilk, but let us snack on some fritos! It would make the students happier and would also provide the school with extra funds. It's a win-win situation.

By: Bryan Gallagher, 12th grade, Griffith, Social Studies

Essay 6)

When schools enter into partnerships with large corporations such as Pepsi, they open doors for many future possibilities. Schools should be able to work with companies like Pepsi and Coca-Cola in order to raise more funds that can improve the school and make the school environment more enjoyable.

The extra funds that would be generated could go to many projects that the school would not be able to afford otherwise. Many schools already have tight budgets, and any added revenue would be greatly utilized. The money could be used to buy new musical instruments, a marquee that keeps students informed, or pamphlets/propaganda that encourage students to make healthy decisions rather than detrimental ones.

The occasional can or bottle of soda is not going to have serious health effects on the students. A bottle of soda is not worse than the plethora of coffee that adults consume everyday. Taking away the soda is not going to solve the problems of child obesity and diabetes. It is only when the students learn self-control and are able to limit their own diets that those problems will change. Having the soda machines on campus would actually help the students learn self-control. If they, the students, have access to the soda all the time, then the students have to learn discipline and responsibility for themselves. Are not these qualities that schools want to encourage? When students leave high school they are on their own and have to make their own decisions. Sheltering the students now, will not prepare them for life out of high school. Students need to learn how to take responsibilities for themselves now while still under some parental supervision. When the time comes for them to be on their own and free, they will have engrained a healthy habit in their lifestyle.

There will always be those students however who can not control themselves, and are on a path of self-destruction. These students would not benefit from soda machines. Soda does contain a lot of sugar, and most contain caffeine. Neither of those substances are good for the body or mind. However these students have chosen to be self-destructive and will probably continue on that route beyond high school. More would benefit from the machines than not.

The world or at least the United States has raised younger generations that do not have or understand responsibility. That needs to be taught to students, and the soda machines would be one way of doing that. Although soda has negative properties to it, the lessons and responsibility that it would teach far outweigh the negative aspects of soda. In schools, the students should come first, and right now the students need to learn the lesson of responsibility that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

By: Angelique Pearce, 12th grade, Mr. Weinberger, Music

Essay 7)

Many public schools in California have created partnerships with large companies, such as Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola, to help supplement budgets that have been steadily decreasing. These sponsoring companies are given the exclusive right to market their products to the students at the school with which they have a contract. The benefit for the school is that it receives some of the company's profit. This is a very good way to help both the schools and the students.

With the funds the public schools receive from the sponsoring companies, schools are able to update curriculum regularly. By being able to keep the material current, the students receive a better and more extensive education than they would if they had to use older, dated curriculum. New textbooks in the science and math departments every few years would keep students on the cutting edge of the research and developments in those areas.

Public schools would also be able to use the funds for so called "extras" for their students. Roosevelt High School and Sierra High School both received enough funding to buy a marquee for their schools. The funds could also be used to buy things like scoreboards and new equipment for athletic activities, as well as extra-curricular activities, to give the students something to do after school lets out. More classes could be offered that normally would not be able to be offered to the students.

Some may say that by making contracts with companies like Pepsi-Cola, the schools are not promoting good nutrition and that things like soda, candy and chips should not be sold at school. But this infringes on the student's right to eat what they wish. If the soda, candy and chips are not sold at school, it is a simpler matter to buy such items at the local grocery store and bring them to school. And with the declining budget for public schools, creating contracts with sponsoring companies offers a solution to the money shortage problem.

Making contracts with large corporations is a creative way to solve the public school's budget problem. It helps the schools get more funding for "extras" for students. This allows the students get a better, more well rounded education.

By: Heather Pedersen, Grade 12, Mr. Cruz, Social Studies

Essay 8)

Public schools in California are dealing with diminishing budgets and a lack of ways to get money more than ever. One outlet schools have found is sponsorships by companies, such as Pepsi-Cola. Sierra High School, for example, benefits from a partnership with Pepsi in exchange for exclusively selling Pepsi products on campus. This has proved to be a controversial issue, however, I believe that partnerships are a good idea and beneficial to both parties.

Schools are running out of choices. Partnerships are an excellent source of money, along with other things. For example, Sierra High has received free vending machines and an expensive marquee from our partnership. Roosevelt High School, also supported by Pepsi, has received free vending machines, soda for events, and \$100,000 for a marquee. Roosevelt High, like most schools, would not have been able to raise such a massive sum without their partnership.

Not only schools benefit from these sponsorships. Students, also, are provided with little “extras.” The money received from Sierra High’s partnership, for instance, is given to the ASB. The ASB uses the money for activities involving the whole student body. These activities are costly and could not happen without money received from Pepsi.

Some say these partnerships are not beneficial to students for nutritional reasons. They claim that if schools refrain from selling junk food, such as soda, candy, and chips, the students will live healthier lifestyles. While this may be true in some cases, I feel that students will keep eating junk food at their homes and even bring it to school, defeating the whole purpose of the school not selling junk food. Although the school can control what they sell, they cannot control what students purchase elsewhere.

Sponsorships from companies are an excellent way to provide schools with critical money. These partnerships benefit both the school, the company, and the student body. Schools, students, and parents should support sponsorships, as they provide much needed money to make schools a better and more comfortable learning institution

By: Heather Tevis, 10, Wyman, Ag. Department

Essay 9)

As you all have been informed, our school has made a proposal to make an agreement with a soda company. I think, however, that is not a good idea. I know that there are many people that will disagree with it, but I think it is for the best interest of the children.

I feel that it is not good when children can just buy soda anytime they want even if their parents don’t want them to. There are a lot of parents who don’t want their children to drink soda, but when the schools start providing it, that takes the power of stopping their children from drinking soda away from the parents. If children are going to drink soda, they should just bring it from home.

They’re a lot of people who might say, “I buy soda from the school every day, and my parents don’t mind.” Even so, there are children out there that have parents that do mind. There are also people that might say that there’s nothing wrong with buying soda at school, and in some senses, this may be true, but all in all, soda is not good for you and some parents don’t want their children drinking it.

Another thing that is a good argument against having soda at school is that there are people that drink a lot of it and it’s bad for you. There are people that will say, “well it’s zero percent fat.” The truth is, the problem isn’t only about how fattening it is, it also has a lot of calories and the biggest problem is that it breaks down your bone marrow. There are kids that drink a few sodas a day, imagine what their bones are going to be like.

The truth is, to all the people that don’t agree with me, it’s just not a good idea to sell sodas to kids at school. It’s not good for them and some people abuse the privilege of having soda machines. I say that we should not go through with this proposal for the kids. It will help them more than the money from soda companies and what come with it.

By: Stephen Wolf, Sophomore: 10, Mr. Scritchfield, Tech. Ed.