


## Profits in the schoolyard: Apples, Pears & Soda Pop

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By Darrel Crain, Chiropractor

"Yes, as a matter of fact I did attend junior high school many years ago," I told my son. "Wow, dinosaurs still roamed the earth back then, didn't they Dad?" he smirked.

"I'll have you know we even had a vending machine on campus!" I said this to impress him with how advanced civilization was several million years ago in the mid-1960s. Of course, there was only one vending machine in residence on the entire school grounds.

But here is the truly bizarre fact about this lonely vending machine: it contained real food! I am not kidding. You could buy actual apples, pears and oranges out of that thing! I remember putting my dime into the slot and watching through the glass window with anticipation as a cold piece of fresh fruit was slowly lowered into the chute by a clever chain-operated conveyor device.

Stalwart American corporations have been hard at work ever since, pursuing new ways to penetrate the chain link fence that surrounds the schoolyards of America, attempting to exploit that juicy, enticing market. Think of it, millions of children held captive inside, all of them just dying to buy something five days a week, nine months of the year!

Soft drink vending machines, for example, were a successful major beachhead for large corporations in the schools. Those machines now generate so much money for school districts across the country that entire school programs would reportedly disappear overnight if we stopped allowing daily sodas to be pumped into our kids while at school.

Hidden from public view is the fact that we are being slammed by the actual cost of this ingenious short-term funding method for education. Epidemics of obesity, type II diabetes and osteoporosis are among the chronic diseases linked to guzzling soda pop.

But perish the thought that any trivial concern such as the health of our children would be considered by school boards as a valid reason to divert corporations from producing profit at any cost!

In fact, the entire fast food industry has been welcomed into many of our schools for budgetary reasons. Now I don't claim that school lunches once provided noteworthy culinary experiences for my generation in the past, but at least the food contained a few nutrients.

Popular food-like substances have replaced traditional school lunches as school budgets have been strained beyond the limit to pay for such things as special teaching programs for the explosion of autistic children in the school system.

Channel One television has been allowed access to classrooms all across America, presumably as a source of revenue and because kids just aren't getting a sufficient quantity of commercials at home. Now we also have Bus Radio, a new enterprise that has launched a captivating plan to reach our school children on school buses across the country every day. Thank heavens. We certainly wouldn't want our kids to have a single free moment to think things over for themselves or have an actual conversation on the bus! This important service is scheduled to begin in many school districts across the country this fall.

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Mining the minds and bodies of our children for corporate profit has reached a new pinnacle with the War on Mental Illness. The overall strategy in this war is to check every single man, woman and child in the United States for undiagnosed mental illness.

Our own President George Bush personally backs screening the mental health of the entire U.S. population, including preschool children. Watch out for TeenScreen and other similar self-evaluating surveys to reach a school near you soon.

The urgency of this massive effort is driven, we are told, by the need to stem the tide of suicides among young people. Computerized, ten-minute questionnaires are offered as the first major step in the solution to the suicide epidemic. So far, these tests affirm what many parents have suspected all along, our children are generally crazy! So crazy, in fact, that 71 percent of teens who were screened in Colorado received a label of some type of mental disorder.

Naturally, these young people were all urged to seek a professional evaluation. And what do you suppose happened when they went in to visit the shrink? Nine times out of ten the kid walked out with a prescription for an antidepressant or some other psychoactive drug.

Thank goodness we can trust those doctors with these dangerous and powerful drugs. They do know what they are doing, right? Surely actual tests are being used to measure the underlying "chemical imbalance" these drugs treat, aren't they? No? Hmm. Okay, then they must be doing brain scans, or brain electrical activity mapping to find the presence of an actual disease, right? No? Cripes! There has to be some kind of physical abnormality that can actually be measured, isn't there? Well I'll be, nothing there either. I guess we are just supposed to trust the man in the white coat with his list of behaviors to decide who has what.

This whole effort ends up sticking labels of scary medical diseases on our kids; diseases such as ADHD, bipolar affective disorder and social anxiety disorder. In real life, labels such as these are very difficult to remove.

If there were any way to prevent the unimaginable tragedy of even one single teen suicide, I would not hesitate to lend my support. But here's a question, do we have an actual suicide epidemic? No. Youthful suicides, rare to begin with, have declined 25 percent in the last decade alone according to official statistics.

But at least the drugs won't harm the kids though, right? Shockingly, children given psychiatric drugs were reported to be twice as likely to commit suicide as those who took a placebo. Nearly two years ago our own Food and Drug Administration (FDA) admitted that antidepressants cause "suicidality" in pediatric patients.

Does it seem completely insane that we are trying to "prevent" suicide by sending children to doctors so they can begin taking drugs that increase, not decrease their risk for suicide? This sordid state of affairs brings to mind the comment by Robert Price, "Crime is an extension of the sort of behavior that is often considered perfectly respectable in legitimate business."

"To the best of my knowledge, this is the highest number of youth suicides we've ever had during the school year — a number we find very frightening." This statement was recently made by Mike Brose, the executive director of the Mental Health Association in Tulsa, Oklahoma, after six years of screening Tulsa youth using TeenScreen.

Screening has not been shown to be an accurate measure for identifying risk of suicide. We have no evidence that fewer suicides result from screening.

There is insufficient evidence that treating people diagnosed at risk of suicide using psychoactive drugs reduces suicide or mortality. The government admits that treating young people with psychoactive drugs actually increases the risk of suicide.

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The whole effort appears to be an elaborate customer recruitment scheme invented by the pharmaceutical industry and backed by the government.

The drug companies have figured out how to infiltrate the nation's public school system and thereby generate millions of new cases of psychiatric drug dependency.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems the War on Mental Illness has only demonstrated the presence of mass insanity among the ranks of our health leaders, not our children. Worse yet, the collateral damage from this war is unimaginably devastating.

Clearly, many heads need to be examined, but I say we should start with the drug industry leaders and government officials and leave the children out of this.

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