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NEWS

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Staten Island Advance

Are corporations running up the score on schools?

New scoreboard with corporate names spurs controversy

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By JODI LEE REIFER
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Recently, Snapple and Brooklyn-based Champion Vending donated a scoreboard to the athletic fields used by McKee and Staten Island Technical high schools. The gift was sort of the cherry on top for the newly renovated fields, the product of a \$500,000 plus upgrade. The scoreboard prominently features each company's logo.

Although the blue banner appears benign to observers who say high school sports are underfunded, to others it demonstrates the growing power of commercialism in the classroom -- a trend that has fueled nationwide debate.

"You can't control the market out there. But you can control what happens inside of schools. You can close your doors and say this just doesn't happen here," said Agnes Molnar of Community Food Resource Center, a Manhattan-based group dedicated to increasing access to nutritious foods.

The scoreboard, to be dedicated today during homecoming at the New Dorp field, is the first of its kind for a public school on Staten Island.

One veteran educator said, "It's the lesser of two evils."

The corporate-endorsed scoreboard reflects a change in Board of Education policy. For years the system shied away from agreements that exposed students to blatant advertisements, even when they accompanied educational tools.

Channel One broadcasts a 12-minute newscast featuring two minutes of commercials into 40 percent of the nation's intermediate and high schools daily, according to the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education, Oakland, Calif. But the New York City school system rejected the deal.

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