

The Way We See It **Kids should concentrate on studies, not sales**

On occasion, we seem to think that children are basically adults with smaller shoe sizes. They aren't. Not by a long shot.

How many of us have been approached by our own kids, our nieces and nephews, our neighbors' kids with various things to sell, all in the name of education? Most of us.

The Way We See It, elementary school children selling all kinds of junk to raise money for educational purposes is a short-sighted idea whose time should end.

First, let's look at the interests of the child.

When a child presents a brochure selling gobs of chocolate (now when a record number of Americans are overweight) or a host of grossly overpriced trinkets, he or she isn't "selling" as we know it.

The child salesman cannot convince an adult buyer that any of these things are necessary or a good buy. An adult wouldn't even attempt such a pitch — it's obviously false.

The hope is that adults will take pity on the child, being sold on the idea of the child's cuteness or winning a T-shirt or a fear their child might be a laggard in the quest for a classroom sales target.

The companies distributing those brochures displaying all that rubbish are counting on these factors, although they'd fall on their swords before admitting it.

So if anyone says the youngsters are learning sales skills, that should set off your internal baloney alarm. It simply isn't true.

The Way We See It, selling by children is far closer to sanitized beggary than salesmanship, and beggary is a parasitic skill to be vigorously discouraged.

There's also the issue of adult responsibility.

Whether the money is for the PTO or the schools directly or for computer equipment or for band uniforms, adults should bear the responsibility for raising money.

Kids in elementary school should instead focus on learning to write complete sentences, crunch numbers, understand our past, appreciate art and what not. Remember those things?

Bear in mind, most of the buyers of the items these kids sell are relatives and friends. The fact is, children of well-to-do parents will have a larger pool of people who can afford to fork over their money for all those useless items.

The Way We See It, asking small children to engage in selling puts the children of poorer and recently relocated families at a disadvantage.

True, teachers may not read each child's sales stats aloud (at least we hope they don't), but the well-off kids, being kids, are going to brag and ask the next one how well he or she did. Competitiveness isn't an inherently bad thing, but that kind of contrast serves no useful purpose.

The Way We See It, schools should prohibit the distribution of sales materials in elementary schools. Period.

If money needs to be raised for things such as bands, we should wait until junior high school. Kids of that age can no longer sell their cuteness; by then they've evolved into audacious know-it-alls who would then have the chance to back up their boasts.

But academically speaking, the first six years are by far the most important, when the foundation is poured. The complications involved in selling aren't needed.

Therefore, all the things that can't be paid for by levies need to be paid for by the adults who care.

School board members can help by banning the glossies of the trinket-and-junk-food dealers from our schools; parents can help by instructing their kids to refuse the brochures when they're distributed.

Either way, we can send selling by children to its well-deserved doom with a minimum of noise and bother.

If kids are to learn a useful craft in the process of raising money, they can help make the goodies for the next bake sale or learn to work the ledgers at the booster booth; that is, if they have the time after excelling in the classroom.

But not selling. Not in elementary schools.