



## The Facts about Pizza Hut's BOOK IT! Reading Incentive Programs

The Pizza Hut BOOK IT! program is one of corporate America's most successful school-based brand promotions. It reaches 22 million school children in 900,000 classrooms each year. Through the BOOK IT! Beginners program, Pizza Hut is even able to target preschoolers. Yet there are a number of reasons to be concerned about the program.

**In the midst of an epidemic of childhood obesity, BOOK IT! promotes Pizza Hut pizza as an integral part of required school curriculum for millions of young children.**

- Students are rewarded with certificates for a free Pizza Hut personal pizza when they reach certain reading goals.
- A Pizza Hut six-inch personal pan pizza has 630 calories and 27 grams of fat. With a topping, it can have as many as 770 calories and 39 grams of fat.
- For children ages 3-5, a Pizza Hut personal pizza can contain more than half of their daily caloric requirement, as well as their entire fat requirement.

**BOOK IT! programs insert a commercial brand into daily classroom routines, continually promoting Pizza Hut to a captive audience of students.**

- Classroom materials feature Pizza Hut logos, and a take-home calendar reminds children daily about Pizza Hut and their impending reward.
- Teachers are encouraged to make events out of the Pizza Hut certificate presentations.

**BOOK IT! undermines parents' efforts to promote healthy eating.**

- Many parents take steps to limit children's exposure to fast food marketing but, for children enrolled in BOOK IT!, exposure to Pizza Hut's branding is compulsory.
- Children receiving their reward certificate in school are told that they earned a pizza—putting pressure on parents who may not want to bring them to Pizza Hut.

**BOOK IT! promotes reading for a reward rather than for its inherent pleasures—and may negatively affect their interest in reading.**

- Research suggests that when a child is given a reward for completing a task, the activity being rewarded may become less pleasurable.
- By focusing on quantitative goals such as the number of books read, BOOK IT! may encourage children to avoid challenging books.

*If I were trying to design a program that would undermine children's interest in books, lead them to read in a shallow fashion, and convince them to avoid challenging texts, I honestly don't think I could top BOOK IT! Dangling pizza in front of kids as a reward for reading, much as one might use treats to house-train a puppy, reflects a completely discredited theory of motivation. Indeed, by teaching children that reading is just a means to an end, the program is likely to be not merely ineffective but positively harmful. ~ Alfie Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards and The Schools Our Children Deserve*.*

**Tell your school to stop promoting junk food in the name of literacy!  
Share this fact sheet with your school's administrators, your PTA,  
and other parents.**

