

## Investing In Our Youth

The good news is, we don't have to wait for the debut of Chris Whittle's for-profit Edison Project to get a glimpse of 21st century American education. Hundreds of prototypes for tomorrow's "market-driven" schools are already conveniently in place, and future National Merit Scholars are already enjoying their first taste of corporate-school partnership—complete with free samples, if also strings attached. Who says serious learning can't also be scrumdiddlyumtious? Just ask the middle school students all across the nation who've recently studied volcanic activity with the aid of Gushers<sup>®</sup>, General Mills' new candy that spurts liquid from its center. "Compare those sugary spurts with real erupting geothermic phenomena," a handy teacher's guide suggests.

The same company also sponsors the helpful "Grow-Up!" program. To assist elementary students' understanding of the link between nutrition and growth, generous supplies of tasty Fruit Roll-Ups<sup>®</sup> are provided (protein per serving: less than one gram; vitamins per serving: less than two percent of U.S. RDA).

Along with the sugary snacks come an unlimited supply of free teaching materials: texts, teacher's guides, homework sheets, and ready-made quizzes. Here, at last, is a sensible model for American school reform: industry experts passing on their own special brand of knowledge.

"Clear-cutting removes all trees...to create new habitats for wildlife," eager young environmentalists



With corporate support, today's **gratis** educational material is not only alive with **iambic** pentameter, but also comes in a palette of Nickelodeon-esque colors and **pregnant** metaphor.

learn from Proctor & Gamble's in-class "Decision Earth" program. "P&G uses this economically and environmentally sound method because it most closely mimics nature's own processes. Clear-cutting also opens the floor to sunshine, thus stimulating growth and providing food for animals."

Similarly, elementary school materi-

als sponsored by the Georgia-Pacific lumber company explain in language kids can understand how modern-day lumberjacks ("foresters") don't *kill* forests, but *save* them.

"When no one harvests," G-P teaches, "trees grow old and are more likely to be killed by disease, rot, and the elements. Very old trees will not support many different kinds of wildlife because the forest floor is too shaded to grow the ground plants animals need." When G-P plants new trees, the text continues, they don't just replant trees. They plant "supertrees."

The business community is out to prove that free-market schools will not only be efficient, but also educationally hip. G-P's "Tree Trunk Activities Kit," designed for science class, also includes the following inspirational kiddie-verse: