

CONSUMER EDUCATION FORUM

AMERICAN
COUNCIL ON
CONSUMER
INTERESTS



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INTRODUCING A NEW TOOL FOR ACCI MEMBERS: THE CONSUMER EDUCATION FORUM NEWSLETTER

ACCI, as an organization for professionals concerned with consumer affairs, has as one of its purposes the promotion of better consumer education. At its last meeting, the executive board recognized the need for methods and materials to help make the teaching of consumer affairs a dynamic force.

Designed with this purpose in mind, the CONSUMER EDUCATION FORUM--a new service of ACCI to its members--makes its debut with this issue.

The basic purpose of the FORUM is to serve as an exchange of ideas about consumer education programs and methods between professionals involved in teaching or educational action programs.

An exchange, of course, means that the content of the FORUM depends to a large extent on YOU. If you have ideas or case studies on classroom experiences, field trips, instructional materials, student involvement activities, and so on, we'd like to hear from you. For more details on how to become a participant in this FORUM, see the back page of this issue.

Louise A. Young
President, ACCI

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FROM A TEACHER'S CASEBOOK: INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATION BEST MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

Mrs. Lois Geller, teacher at Long Beach High School, Long Beach, New York, says:

"As I think back on my consumer course, the individual investigation by the student was really the best motivation for learning and interest. We didn't just study sources for product information; we used them. We didn't just learn which government agencies could help; we called the Office of Consumer Affairs right into the classroom. We didn't just read about second-hand cars; each student decided which car he wanted, followed the ads, called up private sellers, and one student actually went to see her dream car.

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HAVE YOU TRIED THESE TEACHING IDEAS?

* Role-playing shopping situations. This idea comes from Mona Christ, home economics teacher, Madison, Wisconsin. Have students role-play two shoppers who want the same dress, a shopper asking a clerk for assistance, a shopper returning merchandise, a shopper getting information by phone.

* Using a Polaroid camera to get instant illustrations for classroom discussions. Get pictures of shopping situations, product displays, point-of-purchase advertising. Use the camera to illustrate the "three-rooms of furniture for \$399" displays, features to look for when buying or renting a home or apartment, or any other consumer product.

* Using a tape recorder to record songs for use in consumer education ("A Dollar Down and a Dollar a Day"), salesman-customer conversations about products, interviews with teens and young marrieds about their consumer problems.

FROM A TEACHER'S CASEBOOK . . . continued from page 1



"We didn't just study investments; we invested \$3000 (theoretically) in the stock market with a candy bar to the one who made the most money (or lost the least, which gave another lesson). We didn't just study food buying; the students planned a luncheon, sold tickets, and with the money bought the food. Never has the point about buying broilers whole and cutting them into eighths (with dull poultry shears) to save 4¢ per pound been driven home so effectively. And, with 20 whole chickens' worth--wow!

"I remember a lesson where one group obtained prices of brand name shampoos from the local drug store and another group went to the discount store to compare. When the local druggist found out why the girls needed the information, he said to tell their teacher that she was very 'mean.' Then, he proceeded to list his services compared to the discount store. When the girls related this story to the class, they explained the importance of the local merchant so much more effectively than I could have."

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ACCI is a non-partisan, non-profit organization serving professionals through conferences, newsletters, and the JOURNAL OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS. Membership \$6/year.

FOCUS: COMPARING PRODUCT PRICES

If you're comparing the price and quality of products, select products which have appeal to your students. For teens, these might be cosmetics, shampoos, other hair preparations, aspirin.

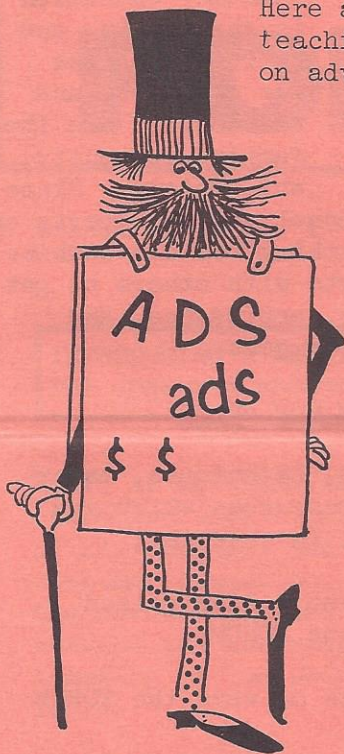
Have students complete a price-brand-store comparison by bringing in different size containers and brands of the same product from different stores. Or, perhaps you can borrow these samples from local stores. Then, have students calculate cost per ounce for each item.

With this background work, discussion questions could run a wide range: Which size and brand is most economical? Is this the best buy for your needs? What should you consider, other than price, when buying different products.

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT . . .

Teaching Tools for Consumer Education, a monthly newsletter for teachers and other educators from Educational Services Division, Consumers Union, 256 Washington St., Mount Vernon, New York 10050? The newsletter contains discussion of general consumer items, background information on current consumer issues, and simple tests or experiments for classroom use. This monthly teaching aid is available without charge to teachers who subscribe to CU's School-College Order Plan. Other educators may get the newspaper and a one-year subscription to Consumer Reports for \$9.50.

Here are some ideas for teaching situations focusing on advertising.



* List and analyze the different forms of advertising--TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, billboard, point-of-purchase, packing.

* Discuss the function of advertising. One definition which might provide a focus is: "communication through information and persuasion." Use an opaque projector to look at different ads and see what and how they commu-

nicate. Discuss the various characteristics of the ads--size, content, purpose, instructional value.

* Survey and discuss the cost of advertising to the company and to the consumer. Write to TV networks, radio stations, magazines, and newspapers for their schedules of advertising rates. Survey current publications, such as Changing Times, to get information on the cost of advertising to the consumer.

* Look at the size of the advertising industry. Ad magazines, such as Advertising Age and Printers' Ink publish information about corporate advertising expenditures in different media.

* Analyze advertising appeals. For samples of ads, ask: Does the ad appeal to habit formation (coffee, cigarettes)? Is it trying to attract new consumers--teens, newlyweds, new residents? Does it appeal to special interests, like hobbies and sports ...or to impulse buyers? Is the ad focused on the \$-conscious consumer looking for sales and bargains or the consumer who has a functional need for products, like spring

school clothes? Does the ad appeal to emotional needs, like "not wanting to be left out," being the first to own something, companionship with the opposite sex, security, welfare of loved ones? Does the ad appeal to ego needs--maturity, youth, status, prestige? Does the ad emphasize pleasure?

* Raise these discussion questions, having students collect background information. What are some ads you like...and some that you don't like? Why? What's a good ad? How much effect does advertising have on the individual, the family as a social unit, the family as an economic unit?

* Ask whether the consumer should have a say in advertising. Should consumers tell advertisers what ads they think are good or bad?

* Use some of these publications to get background information. Local newspapers and magazines; Consumer Reports, Consumer Bulletin, Journal of Marketing, Changing Times.

* Contact these sources for direct-from-advertiser information. Advertising Federation of America, Bureau of Education and Research, 655 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021. Grey Matter (retail edition), Grey Advertising, Inc., 777 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

* Get speakers from local advertising agencies, advertising departments of local stores, Chamber of Commerce, Better Business Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, or the advertising departments of local media.

TEACHER REPORTS SUCCESS STORY:
ILLUSTRATING ADVERTISING APPEALS

From Mrs. Selma Aronson, business education teacher, Elmont Memorial High School, Elmont, New York, comes this success story: "When the topic of advertising appeals came up, the students themselves brought in a great many magazines, cut out various types of advertisements, and created a collage for the bulletin board to illustrate the subject matter. It was quite a colorful addition to the room. As a matter of fact, the principal's remark upon seeing it was WOW!"

WHEN IS A SALE A SALE?

To get background information about sales in local stores, have student observe, interview store personnel, make a survey, or interview consumers.

Questions and topics for discussion might include:

- * What kind of sales do stores have-- seasonal, back-to-school, warehouse, pre-inventory, and so on?
- * Are products purchased specially for the sale or are they regular items priced at reduced rates?
- * How are sales advertised? What do the ads say? Do they refer to regular merchandise, discontinued models, over-stocked items, special purchase items, and so on.
- * Are "bait and switch" ads used in your community?
- * Are combination sales (like 3-rooms of furniture for \$399) less expensive than purchasing items individually?
- * What does the yearly calendar on sales look like? When are different products usually offered at reduced rates?

YOU CAN HELP US: JOIN THE FORUM!



Consumer education is challenging and exciting because the classroom and the content are the family, community, and society. Since

We cannot all be experts on everything, we can combine efforts with others to get a broad range of ideas, approaches, and techniques to use on our jobs.

We'd like to hear from you about . . .

- * ideas, approaches, techniques, materials, and other resources which you have found useful in teaching;
- * questions which you'd like raised and answered in the FORUM;
- * ideas and comments on ways the FORUM can help you.

When you write, please tell us about yourself: name, title, where you work, complete address. And, include a picture if you can. Send all letters to the FORUM editor:
Suzanne Matsen, Room 603, 11 Park Place,
New York, New York 10007.

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