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SCHOOL BIGS EYE SPONSOR TEAM-UP

By YOAV GONEN Education Reporter

June 6, 2008 -- City high-school sports could soon be brought to you by "Your Brand Here."

Education officials are seeking to expand the school system's sponsorship affiliation with brand-name companies that could make their multimillion-dollar deal with Snapple look like a drop in the bucket.

Officials are planning to look at corporations that make shoes, clothing, jewelry and sports equipment to serve as exclusive sponsors and perhaps providers of gear to teams in the Public School Athletic League.

Food and beverage companies would also be offered exclusive vending rights at city schools - similar to the 2003 Snapple deal that has pumped more than \$15 million into sports and physical-education programs.

However, the sponsorships would stop short of billboards at games or team jerseys bearing the names or logos of corporations, according to Eric Goldstein, chief executive for the Department of Education's School Support Services.

"We're definitely not doing that - that's not what this is about," said Goldstein, who likened potential agreements to those of companies that proclaim themselves "official sponsors" of the Olympic games.

"They pay for that right, and in return they get to say that they have that affiliation, he said.

"If there is an opportunity to get equipment, apparel or footwear for our kids, so much the better."

Goldstein said the proceeds would be used to expand the athletic league - which serves more than 32,000 students at more than 200 city high schools - and a similar but smaller program for middle schools.

He declined to say how much money officials are hoping to generate.

"I think it's a win for the company, it's a win for the DOE, and most importantly, it's a gigantic win for the kids," he said.

Education officials are currently seeking sports- management consultants to help broker the deals starting next summer.

Michael Eisenberg, a girls-basketball coach at Francis Lewis HS in Queens, said he wasn't concerned "a billboard on the gym wall that says, 'Eat Carvel ice cream,'" would corrupt students.

"In an ideal world, there'd be enough money for all the teams without

Valuable players

What sponsoring companies can get:

- Exclusive food or beverage vending rights in city schools
- "Official sponsor" bragging rights for providing teams with equipment

What they can't get:

- The right to install billboards at games
- The right to have athletes wear jerseys with their names

Source: City Department of Education



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commercialization - but that's not the reality we live in," he said.

Peter Stern, president of STRATEGIC, a New York-based sports and entertainment marketing agency, said, "If corporate support enters high-school athletics and it's done in a tasteful way, I think this could be a good thing for both parties."

Stern added that a "less is more" approach would be the best way to make sure none of the boundary lines are crossed.

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