

Marketers to connect to classrooms

BY CAREY TOANE

The classroom. Few marketers have walked in without catching the ire of parents and teachers. Enter Classroom Connections, a Toronto-based free program that will bring corporations into 75% of Canadian classrooms—from Quebec to the Yukon—this fall.

“Classroom Connections was developed out of a need of schools to have more resources, which is obvious, and on the other side, corporations wanting to participate in education, many of them for the right rea-



Hoping the parents won't mind the logos

sons,” says Heather MacTaggart, executive director.

The three-year-old program consists of videos, instructional materials and at-home supplements for parents, all sponsored by companies including

Royal Bank (money and banking), Ralston Purina (pet care), Subway (diversity) and Xerox (*Family Connections* magazine).

“All of our materials are written and developed by educators,” says MacTaggart. “In fact, it doesn't have a

marketing slant to it at all. It's for education in support of the curriculum.”

So to what extent is Royal Bank, for example, involved? Their logo is on the front and inside cover of the teacher's

guide and *Family Connections*, as well as a paragraph explaining the sponsor's involvement.

The Classroom Connections board of directors includes the presidents of the Canadian Association of Principals, the Canadian Home and School Federation and the Canadian Association of School Administrators, among others. MacTaggart says she has yet to receive any complaints from parents. But with kits shipping out to 7,500 elementary schools and 2,200 secondary schools this fall, it remains to be seen if corporations will pass this test.