

WAITING FOR “*SUPERMAN*” MESSAGING DOCUMENT

BACKGROUND

- “Waiting for ‘*Superman*’” is directed by Davis Guggenheim, produced by Participant Media and will be distributed by Paramount Vantage. The team that brought the world *An Inconvenient Truth* is now focused on highlighting some of the problems with the American public education system.
- In 111 minutes, the film examines the crisis of public education in the U.S. through multiple interlocking stories – from a handful of students and their families whose futures hang in the balance, to the educators and reformers trying to find lasting solutions within a broken education system.
- The film will have a platform release, opening first in New York and Los Angeles on September 24, 2010, and then expanding to more than 25 markets through the United States and Canada in October with more planned after that time frame.
- We believe this is a critical movie that has the potential to raise awareness, spur dialogue, and encourage action on behalf of America’s young people.
- There is no doubt that the film raises sensitive issues as Guggenheim strives to take our national conversation beyond predictable policy discussions and into the “uncomfortable truths” about public education.
- The movie is a rallying point to start the conversation and spark action. Participant Media is building a national Social Action Campaign around four theme areas of Celebrating Teachers, Ensuring World Class Standards, Ensuring Great Schools and Raising Literacy.
- There will be a dynamic on-line community at www.waitingforsuperman.com/action with resources for social action engagement and local campaign managers in cities across the country.
- Many of America’s Promise Alliance partners and funders will buy out theatre showings and facilitate community discussions of Waiting for “*Superman*” in order to promote dialogue and encourage action. United Way Worldwide is hosting local premieres and “community conversations” in several U.S. markets and the Alliance will complement these events with some additional screenings and the development of toolkits for Alliance partners and other stakeholders to host their own screenings.
- It is our hope that the film and discussions will help us meet the Grad Nation goal of mobilizing Americans to end the dropout crisis and prepare young people for success in college and the 21st century workforce.

KEY MESSAGES

- America's Promise Alliance is delighted for the potential generated by this film to expand the national conversation about America's children and their futures. We and our partners understand that too many families have too few choices to help their children succeed. We know that success starts with learning and a quality education.
 - We believe the dialogue surrounding *Waiting for "Superman"* will serve as a catalyst for a national movement on behalf of our young people and their access to more opportunities for an excellent education.
 - We encourage parents, educators, business and community leaders, policy makers and others to work together to identify ways for each of us to get involved in fixing this national crisis.
- While there are many different and divergent viewpoints about how to fix the American educational system, there are some things we can agree on. We can agree that we have a crisis; that too many young people are left behind; that America can't afford to continue to lose so many of its youngest citizens; and that we all must play a role in providing quality education for our youth.
 - It is time to mobilize all Americans to end the dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and a 21st century career. That's what the Grad Nation Campaign is all about. By focusing on the communities surrounding the 2,000 high schools that account for nearly 50 percent of all young people that drop out of school, we can solve this crisis.
 - This is an unprecedented moment in our nation's history, where leaders at the federal, state and local levels are committed to improving education. Nonpartisan solutions and approaches for addressing our national education crisis are being discussed and implemented all across this country.
 - Our role, everyone's role, begins where the film ends. We hope to leverage the passion and emotion viewers feel after experiencing the film and provide opportunities to help end the high school dropout crisis, better preparing young people for future success.
 - Schools, teachers and administrators cannot do it alone. They need the involvement of committed parents and caregivers, communities, businesses, policy makers and individuals. When all of these entities work together collaboratively, everyone has the potential to become "*Superman*."
 - Support for education reform is essential if we are going to improve graduation rates and make sure children are ready for college/higher education, work and national service. But this alone is not enough. We must also build the public will necessary for any successful national movement while providing the Five Promises – fundamental resources that young people need to succeed comprised of: Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, An Effective Education and Opportunities to Help Others.
- Too often education is left out of the national dialogue. It's pushed aside or absent from our conversations about America's priorities in favor of other pressing issues such as the economy, jobs, health care and national security. But education affects all of these issues and more. We must address the education crisis and act now on behalf of our young people if we want to ensure a safe and prosperous future.
 - We urge you to get involved with the Grad Nation movement. Doing something as simple as reading a book to a child, mentoring a teen, or making a small donation can make a big difference in the life of a young person and his or her path to educational and life success. Find out more ways to help end the dropout crisis at www.americaspromise.org

Q: Why are you promoting this film?

A: The Alliance recently launched the Grad Nation Campaign to mobilize Americans to end the dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and a 21st century career – the film's Social Action effort has the same goal. We believe this film and the dialogue it generates has tremendous potential to spur action in communities throughout the country. Of course we did not make the movie, nor do we have any role in its content, but we believe in its potential to reach beyond those in education or policy circles and get Americans engaged in this crisis to help our young people and protect our future. To learn more about the film, visit www.waitingforsuperman.com.

Q: How did the Alliance get involved with the showing of the film?

A: The Alliance and many of its 400+ partners realized that the Waiting for “*Superman*” Campaign has the potential to create change by provoking audiences to act on behalf of young people. We feel this is an excellent opportunity to bring groups together to see the film, and to discuss the education crisis and ways we can help our young people succeed.

Q: Are you promoting the public charter school movement?

A: Charter schools are one of many innovative solutions to the problems found in our education system. We can learn from the examples of successful charter schools and traditional public schools alike. For the schools that are not successful, the Grad Nation movement is focusing greater attention on the lowest performing schools and the communities that need the most help. We are promoting important conversations that we hope the film generates, and encouraging the best solutions and actions to help end the country's dropout crisis.

Q: What do you feel is the intent of the film?

A: Participant Media has a track record creating entertainment that inspires and compels social change and of bringing important issues into public dialogue. We are excited about the attention that this film brings to the education crisis and hope it will encourage action in communities throughout the country to finally fix this encumbering problem.

Q: Are you politically motivated?

A: We are motivated by the fact that this film has the potential to elevate the conversation about education and to create action towards the Grad Nation goal of ending the dropout crisis. In order to achieve that goal, we need to engage each sector of the community – including policy makers, parents, young people, educators, businesses and the schools we're trying to help.

Q: Are you calling for the end of tenured teachers? Are you anti-teacher union?

A: We strongly support effective teachers, and understand the important role they play in the lives of students. We also believe that communities play a role in the success of each child, and that without the fundamental supports – or Five Promises – in a young person's life, that child is much less likely to succeed.

Q: Do you feel that the public schools portrayed in the film are an accurate reflection of the schools in our country?

A: There are outstanding schools among traditional public, magnet, charter and private schools, just as there are failing and mediocre schools in all of those sectors. Our goal is for *all* children to be able to get a great education – not just those who win a lottery.

Q: What would you like viewers to do after seeing this film?

A: Anyone can be “*Superman*.” By giving time, talent or treasure to a school, youth service provider or young person in your community, you can help more young people stay engaged and stay in school. Opportunities to get involved and get informed can be found at www.americaspromise.org and www.waitingforsuperman.com/action.

Q: What is your Alliance doing to address the issues presented in the film?

A: We have embarked upon the most ambitious campaign our Alliance has ever undertaken, the Grad Nation Campaign, to mobilize Americans to end the dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and a 21st century career. We are engaging and supporting communities, driving advocacy, raising awareness and building our alliance. To join the movement, visit www.americaspromise.org to find out how you can help.

Q: Is the dropout crisis solvable?

A: The crisis is solvable with focus and collaboration. Only 2,000 high schools account for approximately 50 percent of students who drop out of high school and 75 percent of students of color who drop out. By focusing on the communities surrounding these 2,000 high schools, we can end this crisis.