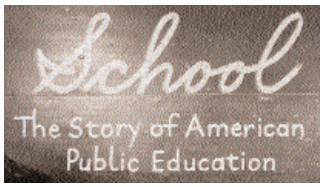
SCHOOL : THE STORY OF AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

PUBLIC SCHOOL: AMERICA'S 200-YEAR EXPERIMENT



"This program should be required homework for policy-makers who make pronouncements on what schools should or shouldn't be."

- The New York Times

"Congratulations to all of you on a terrific campaign. Thanks so much for the good work."

- Barbara Goen
Senior Vice President, Communications, KCET

The Challenge:

Devillier Communications (DCI) was asked to coordinate the national promotion surrounding the premiere of the four-part PBS series *SCHOOL: The Story of American Public Education*. Narrated by Oscar-winning actress Meryl Streep, the series chronicled the great American experiment of universal public education from colonial times to the present.

Strategy:

To achieve the ambitious goal of encouraging community dialogue about the role of public schools, DCI worked closely with a creative partnership of professionals including Stone Lantern Films, KCET/ Los Angeles and Beacon Press, publishers of the series' companion book. DCI recommended a national public awareness campaign that would extend beyond the television page to specialty media outlets aimed at parents, educators and policy-makers.

Tactics:

Specifically, DCI:

- Coordinated an extensive media relations effort targeting television and education writers at national magazines, wires and syndicates and top 30 market daily newspapers. In addition, the agency contacted monthly women's and parenting magazines, education trades and specialty publications serving the Hispanic and African American communities.
- Generated support within the PBS community via special events at the annual PBS conference, and through member station publications and Web sites.
- Collaborated with PBS Interactive to promote the companion Web site to search engines, portals and to the network member stations as well as 100,000 e-mail newsletter subscribers.
- Coordinated a two-day national radio tour featuring co-producers Sarah Mondale and Sarah Patton.

Results:

- The Associated Press described *SCHOOL* as "a fascinating primer on the roots of American schools" and praised its "evenhanded look at…contemporary issues." *The Baltimore Sun* said it represented "exactly what public television should be doing above all else."
- The radio tour resulted in interviews on national and top 30 market radio networks reaching more than 1,200 affiliate stations, with additional placements on National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation" and "Here and Now."
- The media campaign generated more than 44 million consumer impressions. This is the equivalent advertising value of one-half million dollars.
- More than 6.4 million Americans tuned in to watch *SCHOOL*, making it the most successful education program to air on PBS in the previous five years.

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*"I was absolutely blown away by our **SCHOOL** team at the PBS conference. You guys were all great. Unbelievable, in fact! It's no wonder we got such a great response. I was reminded that we are privileged to be working with a wonderful group of people."*

- Sarah Mondale
Director and co-producer, Stone Lantern Films, Inc.