

# Waiting for “Superman”

## A Social Action Campaign

### From the Makers of An Inconvenient Truth

The American film industry has always shone a spotlight on some of our nation’s most seemingly intractable social problems. From *The Grapes of Wrath* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* to *Philadelphia* and *Erin Brockovitch*, movies have sparked awareness, changed minds and inspired action. In 2006, the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (AIT) took the power of cinema to new heights by highlighting former Vice President Al Gore’s campaign to educate citizens about the dangers of climate change. Directed by Davis Guggenheim, the film earned an Academy Award for Best Documentary Film, and enjoyed huge box office success worldwide.

More importantly, AIT re-ignited the environmental movement in the United States. Before the film’s release, 33% of Americans believed global warming was real; after the film’s release, that number shot to 85%. AIT also helped inspire:

The same award-winning team that produced *An Inconvenient Truth* created *Waiting for “Superman”*. Participant Media and Paramount Pictures. Jeff Skoll, Diane Weyermann, Executive Producers Davis Guggenheim, Director Lesley Chilcott, Producer

- ✓ 1,000+ social action events
- ✓ 5 climate bills introduced in Congress
- ✓ Passage of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (Waxman-Markey Bill)

**Just as AIT elevated the conversation about climate change...  
...Waiting for “Superman” hopes to do the same for education.**

**We hope you will be part of this movement to motivate millions of people to take action and help improve our nation’s education system.**

## About the Film

*Waiting for “Superman”* examines the crisis of public education in the United States 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 documentary features leaders in the field of education, including philanthropist Bill Gates; Geoffrey Canada, President of the Harlem Children’s Zone; Washington, D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee; and Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Founders David Levin and Mike Feinberg. Grammy Award-winning artist John Legend composed the film’s end title song, “Shine”.

### Winners and Losers

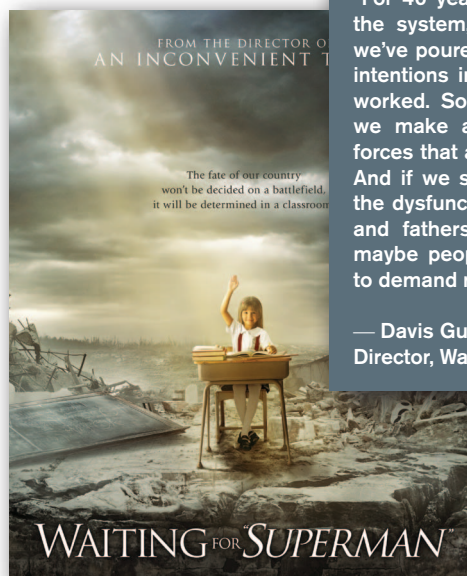
The film reveals the political forces that conspire to keep educators from replicating successful reforms on a larger scale. In the end, there simply are not enough spaces at good public schools for all the children who want to attend them.

Many of the country’s best public schools admit students in the fairest way they can – by lottery. In heartbreaking detail, Guggenheim shows how the lottery process produces real life winners and losers — some children get a chance at a better life while the majority is left waiting.

### Uncomfortable Truths

Guggenheim strives to take our national conversation beyond predictable policy discussions and into topics no one wants to talk about — the “uncomfortable truths” about public education.

With candor, poignancy and hope, *Waiting for “Superman”* makes clear that the noble vision of America’s public schools is attainable. All children can learn and all neighborhoods can have good schools. All that is lacking is the public will to change it.



“For 40 years we’ve poured money into the system, and it hasn’t worked. And we’ve poured great people with the best intentions into the system, and it hasn’t worked. So my feeling was, ‘Why don’t we make a movie about the invisible forces that are keeping it from working?’ And if we show the real human cost of the dysfunction — the kids and mothers and fathers fighting for them — then maybe people will be outraged enough to demand real change.”

— Davis Guggenheim,  
Director, *Waiting for “Superman”*

# About the Social Action Campaign

The movie will be the catalyst to engage millions of Americans in an exciting and effective Social Action Campaign **dedicated to ensuring that every child gets a great education and is prepared for life beyond high school.**

The Social Action Campaign, It's Possible, will utilize a multi-tiered approach that creatively engages educators, parents, business leaders, celebrities, policymakers, students and concerned citizens at the local, state, and national levels.

The campaign is designed to build **public, personal, and political will** so that authentic change becomes a reality.

We will do this by achieving three goals:

- 1. Build Awareness** — Create widespread awareness that it's possible for every child in America to get a great education. (Building Public Will)
- 2. Inspire Personal Involvement** — Provide resources and opportunities that drive individuals to make a difference by donating, volunteering and mentoring. (Building Personal Will)
- 3. Ignite Social Change** — Create a platform for social change by igniting actions directed at policymakers at the local, state and national levels. (Building Political Will)

## Success will inspire:

- ✓ Citizens from across the country to take action to ensure every child gets a great education.

## Success will result in:

- ✓ America's high school dropout rate cut by 10% in two years.
- ✓ At least 30 states pass and implement Common Core Standards.
- ✓ ESEA Reauthorization enhances efforts to improve teacher effectiveness through hiring, training, mentoring, evaluation and reward for success.
- ✓ At least 10 states pass laws lifting barriers to the creation, expansion and replication of high performing public schools.

"One of the saddest days of my life was when my mother told me Superman did not exist. Cause even in the depths of the ghetto, you just thought he was coming... She thought I was crying because it's like Santa Claus is not real. I was crying because no one was coming with enough power to save us."

— Geoffrey Canada,  
Social Activist & Educator



## WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN" and GET SCHOLED

Developed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Viacom, Get Schooled is a national program that inspires and mobilizes people to work harder to increase graduation rates. Waiting for "Superman's" Social Action Campaign will work closely with Get Schooled to encourage participation in its Community Challenge series and to reinforce its message that graduation is the key to future success for all students.

# Our Policy Focus

The movie is the rallying point to start the conversation. The campaign is a roadmap to action that will highlight four issues:

## Celebrate Great Teachers • Ensure World-Class Standards • Encourage More Great Schools • Raise Literacy Rates

Although different policy issues are decided at local, state and national levels, here is how each issue will be integrated into the campaign.

**1. Celebrate Great Teachers** — Effective teachers are at the heart and soul of our student's success — they are our super-heroes. The film and campaign will:

- ✓ Inspire people to become teachers.
- ✓ Demand that teachers have the tools they need to be successful including effective training, fair evaluations, and rewards tied to measurable student achievement.
- ✓ Motivate people to contact their local superintendents and school boards to ensure we have a great teacher in every classroom.

**2. Ensure World-Class Standards** — We need to ensure our students can compete in the global economy — setting common, high standards is a critical step. The film and campaign will:

- ✓ Build an awareness of declining standards and resulting cost to all students.
- ✓ Inspire people to call on their Governors, Gubernatorial candidates and state legislators to pass and implement Common Core Standards.

**3. Ensure Great Schools** — We know we need to invest in innovative educational models with proven track records. The film and campaign will:

- ✓ Educate people about the success of high-quality public charter schools and other innovative teaching models and methods.
- ✓ Activate people to call on their elected officials to create opportunities for proven innovation and to remove barriers to the creation of new high performing schools.

**4. Raise Literacy Rates** — In order to succeed, every child must be able to read. The film and campaign will:

- ✓ Inspire personal action in the form of book donations and volunteer opportunities to coach young students in improving their reading skills.

### The Reality

- ✓ In America, a high school student drops out every 26 seconds.
- ✓ Among 30 developed countries, the U.S. ranks 24th in math and 17th in science.
- ✓ By the year 2020, 123 million American jobs will be high skill/high pay, but only 50 million Americans will be qualified to fill them.

## The Strategy

### The Pledge

We know from An Inconvenient Truth and other films that the first critical step in elevating the conversation and movement behind an issue is getting as many people as possible to see the movie. Seeing the film demonstrates what is at stake and ignites the campaign. With your help, Americans will take the pledge, see the movie and motivate others to take action.



make a difference  
**PLEDGE**  
to see the film

- ★ Take the pledge at [WaitingForSuperman.com](http://WaitingForSuperman.com)
- ★ Email the pledge invitation to family and friends
- ★ Post a link to the pledge on your personal and organizational Twitter feed, Facebook page, and website

Your pledge will help kick off the movement and trigger real donations for kids across the country. Our first milestone is 50,000 pledges, at which point First Book will donate 250,000 books to classrooms in thousands of schools.

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## The Campaign

The Social Action Campaign is built on the understanding that education reform requires action at all levels of government. Understanding that “one size” never fits all, the campaign will offer individuals and groups different ways to participate with information, resources and opportunities to take action.

The campaign is organized around several key strategies with the chance to partner at each level. In at least 15-20 cities, the campaign will organize local Champions to help expand, and implement the campaign. Here are some highlights of the campaign:

- 1. A dynamic on-line community** at [WaitingForSuperman.com](http://WaitingForSuperman.com) will allow individuals to find resources and information and participate in various mobilization campaigns. Individuals will be drawn to the website through the “Text: POSSIBLE” campaign from the movie’s end credits, as well as from outreach driven by our partners. The website will include:
  - ★ Information about local schools, a parent toolkit, and a celebration of great teachers
  - ★ Ways to donate, volunteer, and mentor at the local level
  - ★ Opportunities to take action and send a message to policymakers
  - ★ Featured organizations that are working to make it possible for every child to get a great education
- 2. Live events** at the local, state and national level will draw visibility for the issue and provide opportunities to take action. Highlights include:
  - ★ Involvement of celebrities
  - ★ Citizen education forums in select cities
  - ★ Special film premieres in select cities
  - ★ State Capitol Days in select states with screenings, forums and advocacy meetings
  - ★ National Townhall meeting and Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C.
- 3. Four major take action** initiatives designed to create real change. While the website will present many ways to make a difference, the Social Action Campaign will feature four unique mobilization campaigns. Highlights include:
  - ★ **Teachers Rock** local campaign will engage parents and concerned citizens to contact school officials to help teachers perform at high levels by ensuring strong training, mentoring, and rewards based on student-achievement outcomes.
  - ★ **Governors Pledge** statewide campaign urging participants to contact their Governors and gubernatorial candidates to pledge to implement the Common Core Standards.
  - ★ **It’s Possible** nationwide campaign urging participants to contact their state and federal legislators to ensure kids have more options to attend proven, high performing schools.
  - ★ **Let’s Read** local campaign recruiting volunteers to work with elementary school-aged kids to learn to read.

## How You Can Become a Social Action Campaign Partner

You can help ensure our children are ready for the world by engaging your network and/or committing your resources in support of the Waiting for “*Superman*” Social Action Campaign.



- ✓ Support the pledge by activating your network
- ✓ Support the pledge by donating to the “progress meter”
- ✓ Sponsor group sales so you can have your own private screening
- ✓ Sponsor local and national events
- ✓ Sponsor website tools
- ✓ Activate your network to participate in local, state and national campaign activities

*For more information on how to become a Social Action Campaign partner, please contact Lindsay Guetschow — Email: [LGuetschow@participantmedia.com](mailto:LGuetschow@participantmedia.com) Phone: 310-246-7731*