



Every Day Leads to Graduation Day - Parents Hold the Key

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide and Communities In Schools (CIS) of Georgia, Jan 1,2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Integrated Communications — Nonprofit Organizations

CIS of Georgia engaged Ogilvy Public Relations (Ogilvy PR) to develop an integrated statewide communications campaign during the “back to school” season to accomplish the following objectives:

- Reach parents across the state through multiple communications channels;
- Convey the importance of parental involvement in a child’s education in all communications including a new Parent Engagement Toolkit and an online Parent Resource Center;
- Drive traffic to the new online Parent Resource Center at <http://www.CISGA.org/ParentResourceCenter>.

Integrated communications includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines. The nonprofit subcategory is specifically intended for health and welfare organizations, as well as educational and cultural institutions not included in other subcategories.

Full Text: **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

Georgia is facing a dropout epidemic with only two-thirds of high school seniors donning a cap and gown in 2012 – the lowest number in the Southeast and the fourth lowest in the country. Communities In Schools (CIS) of Georgia, part of the largest national dropout prevention organization in the country, believes that parents hold the key to decreasing the number of high school dropouts. Research has consistently proven that students with parents who are involved in their education have fewer behavioral problems, better academic performance and are more likely to graduate from high school than students whose parents are not involved.

Nationally, CIS serves 1.25 million students in 27 states and the District of Columbia. The organization works with local school districts and community organizations to connect resources and services, including mentoring, parent education, after-school tutoring and more, to students at risk of dropping out and their families. In Georgia, 41 CIS local affiliates and 17 Performance Learning Centers®, an alternative learning option for high school students, provide services to more than 140,000 students in hundreds of school and community-based sites.

Objectives:

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Timing:

- June/July: Planning and campaign development
- August 1 – September 15: Paid media campaign and earned media outreach
- September 15 – October 15: Campaign wind down/wrap up
- November 1 – December 6: Planning/execution of “Georgia Graduates: Parents Hold the Key” education roundtable

Total Budget: \$300,000

- \$125,000 – Ad buy
- \$125,000 – Account fees, creative development, website design
- \$50,000 – Georgia Graduates: Parents Hold the Key Education Roundtable planning and execution

RESEARCH

Ogilvy PR conducted primary research including interviews with Georgia parents, educators and CIS stakeholders to determine the overall communications landscape, parent perceptions and common barriers to parent involvement across the state of Georgia. We also reviewed secondary research provided by the client including previous focus groups and trend data around graduation in the state of Georgia.

PLANNING

The primary challenge we faced was developing a campaign to reach across the diverse ethnic (Caucasian, Hispanic and African American parents) and socio-economic group of Georgia parents. Through our research, we learned that a variety of barriers exist to parent engagement - it is not a “one size fits all” problem or solution. We also found that, overall, parents, regardless of where they live or how much money they make, WANT to be involved in their child’s education, but often don’t know how to start.

With this challenge in mind, we worked with CIS of Georgia to develop a new online Parent Resource Center at www.CISGA.org, which contains a variety of free information to help parents get involved in their child’s education.

Also based on our research, specifically interviews with parents and education experts, we determined that reaching the target audience of Georgia parents and caregivers in the short timeline allowed by the launch of the Parent Resource Center and the “back to school” season would require a straightforward, multichannel campaign including a mix of paid (advertising), earned (media relations/publicity) and owned (social, internal and community relations) media.

The campaign developed by Ogilvy PR centered on the theme: “Every day leads to graduation day.” This theme was designed to convey the fact that every day, every action, every individual school project and test, from Kindergarten through 12th grade, leads to high school graduation day.

All communication, including paid advertising and media relations, was designed to reach parents and drive them to the online Parent Resource Center which, ultimately, would help them become more involved in their child’s education.

EXECUTION

We designed the campaign creative to be approachable and straightforward. It had to transition well across mediums, including online and outdoor, appeal to all of our key demographics, and lend itself to a strong earned media relations campaign.

Once the campaign creative was finalized, we launched our advertising campaign in Georgia's media markets including Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, Rome and Albany. Advertising elements included outdoor/billboard advertisements placed in high traffic locations, online advertisements placed on a variety of national websites as well as Facebook (geotargeted to Georgia), and local news and lifestyle websites frequented by our target audience. We also developed a radio script for traffic/weather reads on high reach stations in Georgia's media markets.

In tandem with the paid advertising campaign, we conducted a highly successful media relations campaign, "pitching" the new Parent Resource Center and the campaign to high-influence media outlets across the state. We also leveraged social media throughout the campaign, creating customized, engaging content for CIS of Georgia's Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest properties specifically designed to drive conversation and traffic to the online Parent Resource Center.

In addition to the statewide advertising and media relations campaign, we placed a large focus on grassroots outreach and local community engagement. We developed a variety of materials to help local CIS staff engage community organizations and leaders around the launch of the Parent Resource Center, including outreach letters and flyers. We also developed local toolkits, including printed versions of all of the online resources and promotional materials to help local CIS contacts and parent liaisons directly engage and reach parents in their communities.

To continue the momentum of the campaign, CIS of Georgia also engaged Ogilvy PR to help them host the first-ever "Georgia Graduates: Parents Hold the Key" education roundtable on December 6 in Atlanta. At this first of its kind event, more than two dozen working parents, government and education officials, as well as leaders from businesses including Delta Airlines, The Coca-Cola Company and Kaiser Permanente, joined Communities In Schools (CIS) of Georgia to discuss the important role parents play in a student's academic success and how attendees might work together to support Georgia parents and their children. The event was the first step in a long-term public/private partnership to engage Georgia parents and increase the graduation rate across the state.

EVALUATION

The six-week campaign was a resounding success. Through the multichannel mix of paid media, news coverage and social media, we reached millions of people across the state of Georgia:

- Earned media outreach resulted in **22.7 million impressions**, including 30+ individual print/online/broadcast placements across the state and posting of the campaign press release on 375 national and local websites.
- Social Media (CIS of Georgia Only)
 - **34,156** Facebook impressions; 14% fan page growth during campaign
 - **941,889** Twitter impressions
- Advertising generated **62.7 million impressions** across radio, online, and outdoor

In just six short weeks, the integrated communications campaign drove an incredible amount of traffic to the new online Parent Resource Center:

- More than **12,000 people** visited the Georgia-specific website during the campaign
 - **First time visitors accounted for 85%** of traffic to website
 - There were **four times** as many direct visits to the Parent Resource Center than the CIS of Georgia homepage

We also empowered local CIS of Georgia staff and parent liaisons/coordinators across the state to continue to promote the Parent Resource Center and the importance of parent involvement by printing and mailing **more than 600 copies of** the local toolkit and promotional materials directly to them at the conclusion of the campaign.

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