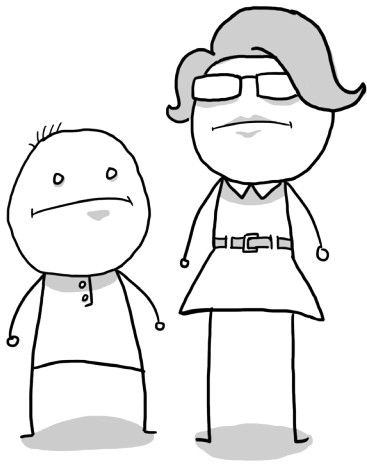




**HIP'S GUERRILLA CLASSROOMS**  
2012 JAY CHIAT AWARD SUBMISSION  
*Communications/Media Strategy*



## SUMMARY

When a parent is involved every day in supporting a child's education, that child does better in school. Yet, while simple things like asking, "What did you learn in school today?" seem so easy and natural, many Milwaukee Public Schools parents weren't even doing that. The mission of Milwaukee's "Having Involved Parents" program is to reinvigorate parent involvement in education.

But the parents they wanted to reach had an adversarial relationship with school themselves. Many had struggled. Some had dropped out. How do you engage in a conversation about the importance of education with these parents? And in a way that isn't an indictment of their parenting skills?

We couldn't tell these parents to be involved. We needed to find ways to literally involve them.

Guerrilla Classrooms transformed everyday experiences into opportunities for parents to engage educationally with their children. Buses became museums. Transit shelters became math problems. When we exhausted mainstream media opportunities, we took over parks and beaches with custom installations built from scratch.

Tens of thousands of parents interacted with the campaign with their children. Program participation skyrocketed. Major corporate donors stepped up, and school systems abroad inquired about licensing.

People got involved.





## THE EDUCATION CRISIS

America is stuck in an endless debate over how to solve the problem of our failing educational system. And everyone has an opinion. More government intervention, less government intervention. Higher pay for teachers. Eliminate teacher unions. Charter schools. Vouchers. Standardized testing.

And while we debate and argue back and forth, it's our children who end up paying the ultimate price. Unfortunately, the single most important factor in determining a child's success in school is largely being ignored: having involved parents.

When a parent is involved every day in supporting a child's education, that child does well in school. That's a fact. Research has confirmed it. Parents agree. Educators too.

Yet while making sure your child attends school every day or asking about homework seems so natural to some, many inner-city parents whose children attend Milwaukee Public Schools weren't even doing that. They certainly weren't helping out with homework, getting involved in reading programs or attending school events and parent-teacher conferences. They weren't involved.

Milwaukee's COA Youth and Family Center's HIP (Having Involved Parents) program was founded with a mission of reinvigorating parental involvement in children's education. They help facilitate daily parental involvement in children's education and reinforce that parents are children's first and most important teacher.

HIP needed help bringing more attention to the value of being an involved parent. Scrappy and grass roots, they had gained some traction over the years and were getting results. They just needed a boost.

## THE CHALLENGE: MOTIVATING PARENTS

As we dug into this assignment, we uncovered significant barriers our work would have to overcome to succeed.

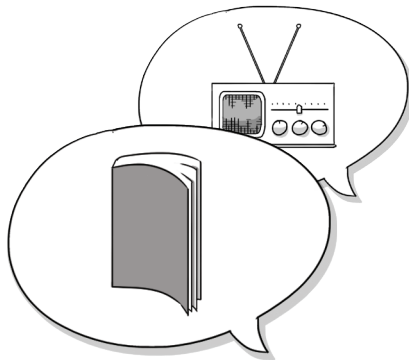
A lot of the parents we were looking to reach had an adversarial relationship with school as children. Many struggled. Some were dropouts. That attitude carried over into adulthood. Any mention of education or schooling immediately put them on the defensive. The very smell of a school was a turnoff.

Unfortunately for their children, that perception of school left them ill-equipped and unmotivated to help their own children.

Additionally, there is a huge sensitivity among our target to being told how to parent. Frankly, nobody wants to be told that they're a bad parent. Or told how to parent or to be a better parent.

Letting them know that their lack of involvement was letting their children down was going to be a struggle.



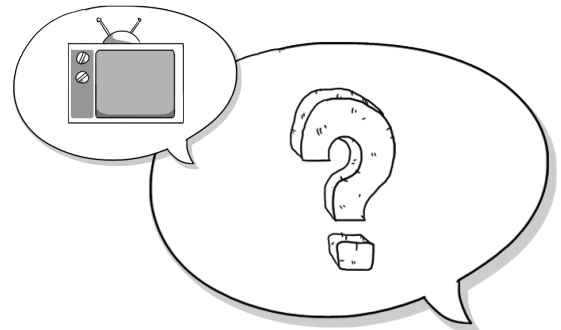


## GETTING TO THE IDEA

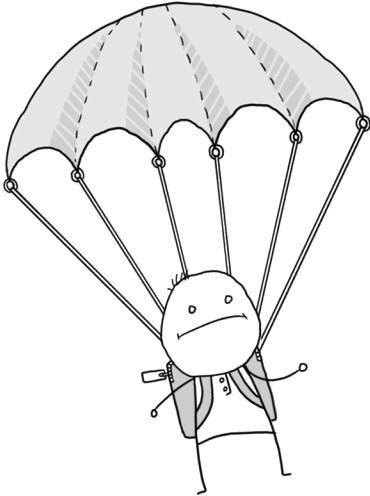
We looked at a lot of different ideas. A lot of them were ads. Good ads. The problem was they were all talking *AT* the parents. We decided a clever headline in an ad couldn't create confidence or reverse the baggage these parents were carrying. You can't simply tell people to be more involved.

We had to involve them. Literally.

What if we could reach them when they're with their kids and give them something to do together? Something that motivates because it's fun. Something that equips them to get more involved because it serves as a perfect example of how quickly and effortlessly you can participate in your children's education. And something that shows what an amazing difference a little participation can make.



# EXPERIENTIAL GUERRILLA CLASSROOMS

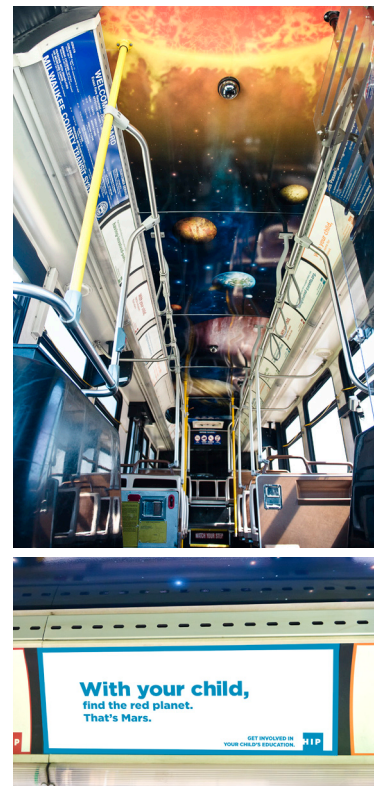


The idea behind the “With your child” campaign was to create real-world opportunities for parents to have meaningful involvement with their kids. To let every single communication be an opportunity for involvement. To let the work itself facilitate being an involved parent, being that first and best teacher.

At the heart of the campaign was the vision of transforming everyday things into opportunities to engage. We put our ideas in public places where they would be encountered by the maximum number of people and where participation can be infectious. We created activities that could not be missed and were simple and quick. They are completely conspicuous, designed to capture the imagination of the kids as much as the parents (since we might need them to pull their parents into participating), and so easy to understand and do that any ingoing inertia to ignore them is eliminated.

We turned buses into museums on wheels. So a ride to the store became a trip through space, under water or on a safari jeep, complete with educational activities inside for parents and kids to engage in together. A bus shelter became a chance to read your child a story or measure a child’s height in centimeters.

Beyond transit, the inner-city parents and children we were trying to reach didn’t consume a lot of the traditional media with their children. They aren’t watching TV together, or reading the newspaper or magazines, or listening to the radio much. Many don’t have computers and fewer have Internet access.





And so we created our own media.

We took over city parks and beaches and fabricated custom installations from scratch. Swing sets transformed into geometry lessons. A walk on the lakefront turned into a walk on the moon. Playing a game of around the world actually helped families learn the names of the continents. Electronic displays converted sound into imagery while volunteers taught kids and parents sign language.

Every engagement was based in education and located where parents are naturally with their kids over the course of the day. They required absolutely no detour from whatever else the parent and child were doing when they discovered them. These are activities they simply could not avoid and simply could not help but do.



## THE RESULTS

Parents got involved. Tens of thousands of Milwaukee Public Schools students and their parents interacted in the “classrooms.” Our target would have discounted mere ads that told parents to be more involved. They would have been yet another in a long line of well-meaning but forgettable public service messages. By creating opportunities to show our target how simple it is to be involved in their child’s education, we were able to engage them in ways an ad never could. In the end, parents not only became engaged with the cause. They became engaged with their children. School participation and volunteers **quadrupled**. Family participation **tripled**.

The campaign was also instrumental in helping to jump-start a program lost in a sea of solutions to the educational problem. Major corporate donors approached HIP to get involved. The campaign delivered **millions of media impressions, both earned and paid**, and the “With your child” campaign received local, national and international attention, with school districts in foreign countries inquiring about licensing the program.

