

GMMB

To: First 5 California
From: GMMB, Durazo Communications, IW Group
Re: Strategic and Creative Direction for the Next Phase
Date: 10/30/02

The purpose of this memo is to lay out our recommendations for the strategic and creative direction of the next phase of the ad campaign.

As we've discussed, the new round of advertising will significantly expand the objectives and reach of the campaign. In the past, the campaign has sought to inform parents and caregivers about how and why to improve the early development of their young children. Now, we will seek to persuade all adults in California that maximizing early childhood development benefits everyone, and that they should therefore support state efforts to provide universally available early learning programs.

We are not abandoning parental education efforts; we are simply expanding the target audiences to include all adults, and enlarging the goal to include building public support.

As a result, the campaign's job becomes significantly more challenging. It is essential, therefore, that we have a very well-developed strategy for defining our goals and how we want to accomplish them.

As you know, we have undertaken a comprehensive research process to help us understand the landscape in which we operate. This plan is heavily based on the results of that research.

1010 WISCONSIN AVENUE, NW ■ SUITE 800
 WASHINGTON, DC 20007
 T: (202) 338-8700 ■ F: (202) 338-2334

10635 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD ■ SUITE 360
 LOS ANGELES, CA 90025
 T: (310) 234-8787 ■ F: (310) 234-8958

1200 WESTLAK AVENUE, N ■ SUITE 1005
 SEATTLE, WA 98109
 T: (206) 352-1598 ■ F: (206) 352-8758

WWW.GMMB.COM

I. RELEVANT SURVEY FINDINGS

We want to begin by briefly summarizing some of the survey results that were most important in developing our strategic recommendations. This section is not meant to be a comprehensive summary of the survey and focus group research; rather, it simply highlights the key findings that are driving the strategy being proposed.

The following findings were especially significant to us:

- 1. There is considerable support for and understanding of the importance of the early years, but little demand for the state to do more.**

Throughout the focus groups and survey, participants consistently say that the needs of young children are very important, and there is some base of support for doing more to help them.

However, the needs of children ages zero to five are ranked as a lower priority than the needs of adolescents, seniors, and children with disabilities. These findings are consistent across ethnic groups. Even parents of young children say the needs of seniors and adolescents are greater than the needs of children zero to five (they do, however, believe more should be done to help parents).

Perhaps more significantly, there is far less dissatisfaction with efforts on behalf of young children than there is for other populations. While 72% of adults say major changes are needed in California's public school system, and 71% cite the need for major changes in health care, only 48% say major changes are needed in efforts to ensure that all children start kindergarten ready to do their best. Only among African Americans is there significantly greater demand for change (74%).

- 2. People strongly believe that what First 5 calls "school readiness" pays dividends. They are especially likely to see and believe in the shorter-term, academically-oriented dividends.**

Large majorities of the public believe that early education efforts help children do better throughout their school careers, and will improve the performance of the K-12 system. Non-whites feel even more strongly about these benefits than do whites. However, there is substantially less belief that longer-term, non-academic benefits (such as a reduction in crime or teen pregnancy) will materialize.

3. People see the early years as primarily the responsibility of parents.

As you know, this finding has been consistent throughout all the research we've conducted over the past 22 months. However, this survey helped us develop an even clearer picture.

While people feel strongly that parents have primary responsibility to provide emotional, physical, and intellectual support for their young children, they seem to support the state helping out in certain ways, under certain circumstances. For example, there is plenty of support (though little demand) for providing health coverage or pre-school to low income parents.

4. There is considerably more awareness of the challenges facing lower income populations than middle class families, and there is more support for means-based assistance than for universal benefits.

Sixty-two percent of the public believe that obtaining health care for young children is a very serious or fairly serious problem for low-income families, while 19 percent say it is not much of a problem. For working class families, the numbers are 57 and 13 percent, but for middle class families (defined as incomes of \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year) the numbers were 30 and 42 percent.

Similarly, 62 percent said finding affordable pre-school programs was a very serious or fairly serious problem for low-income families, while 18 percent said it was not much of a problem. Fifty-one percent said it was a problem for working class families, and only 25 percent said it was a problem for middle class families, while 45 percent said finding affordable pre-school was not much of a problem.

5. The perceived failures of the California K-12 system do not interfere with most people's support for an increased state role in the first five years of life. In fact, improving K-12 performance is the strongest argument for such an effort.

This and other surveys clearly indicate that most people are dissatisfied with the performance of the public school system. However, when asked whether or not the state should take on universal pre-school until it does a better job of meeting its K-12 responsibilities, large majorities said that universal pre-school would in fact help improve the performance of K-12.

6. If properly framed, there is a great deal of support for the notion of universally available organized education before the age of five.

In the focus groups, when we told people to imagine they could build the public education system from scratch, and asked them at what age they would make it universally available, strong majorities said between three and four.

Respondents to the survey were a bit more mixed in their answers – 23 percent answered three or earlier, and 48 percent said four or earlier. However, we believe this was because in the focus groups, it was possible to describe in more detail that the system for younger children need not mirror the current kindergarten system – instead, it could involve fewer days and fewer hours per week. Even so, in the survey, the percentage of people who said organized education should begin before five was equal to the number who said five or later. And in many groups – including African Americans, English-speaking Latinos, and parents of young children, support for starting earlier than five was considerably greater.

7. Spanish-speaking Latinos are generally more supportive of early learning programs than most other groups, but express even less demand than do others.

Many surveys we have conducted in the past suggest that Spanish-speaking Latinos have a stronger understanding of the benefits of educational programs, but also have lower expectations of those programs. This survey is no exception. Spanish-speaking Latinos are less likely to express the need for the state to do significantly more in almost every area of early learning.

II. STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Based on the research findings outlined above, we believe the ad campaign must accomplish the following:

1. **We must create demand by creating awareness of the problems caused by insufficient attention to the early years.** Currently, not enough people see the need for the state to do more, because they don't see a problem. If we offer people the solution to a problem they are not aware exists, they will reject it. We must educate people that there is a problem, thereby leading to demand for improvement.
2. **We must portray "school readiness" as a means to an end, not an end in and of itself.** The end is improved K-12 performance, both for the children and the schools. Improved "school readiness" has appeal primarily because of the dividends it produces later in the education process.
3. **Our priority targets are women, African Americans, and Latinos.** The survey suggests that women of all ethnicities, and African Americans and Latinos regardless of gender are most likely to be interested and activated by issues relating to young children. In contrast, white men are relatively disinterested and inattentive to early childhood issues. While it is tempting to respond to this finding by treating them as a prime target, we believe it makes more sense to devote resources to moving the groups most likely to be moved. Our goal for white men should be acquiescence, not activism.

Based on the recommendation of the IW Group, and with the agreement of the First 5 Review Group, this effort will also not target non-English speaking Asian Pacific Islanders. The consensus is that within this population, we should continue to focus on parental education efforts for the foreseeable future. And, once the Kit for New Parents becomes available in Asian languages, we will want to aggressively market the kit in the parental education ads.

Among Spanish-speaking Latinos, we believe our strategy should begin by raising expectations. We need to make them aware that currently available resources are not adequate, and need to be increased.

4. **We must continue our efforts at parental education.** It is crucial that we continue to build upon the work we've already done in educating parents and caregivers about the difference they can make in the way their children develop, not just because it is important in and of itself, but also because it will also help to create more demand for improved programs from the state. The more we communicate about the relationship between the early years and future outcomes –

especially in K-12 – the more we will create demand for a greater level of service from the state.

In addition, continuing the parental education component will provide a reassuring note that First 5 is aware that the parental role remains paramount in early childhood development.

We will explore several different options: continuing to run ads that we have already produced, modifying existing ads to increase the focus on the benefits of early education during the K-12 years, or creating new ads which discuss both the benefits of parental activities and of other activities.

As an aside, we would also like to discuss with the review group the extent to which the campaign should continue to drive requests for the Kit for New Parents.

5. **We must explicitly make the case that all children would benefit from a greater state role in early education – not just lower income children.** Right now, there are strong predispositions to believe that state programs should be means-based. And, of course, in an era of scarce resources, it makes sense to prioritize low-income families. However, if the long-term goal is universal availability of early education programs, we must begin to lay the groundwork now.
6. **We must break the constantly reinforced impression that “education” starts at the age of five.** In many respects, our biggest challenge is the fact that most people unquestioningly believe that everything before the age of five is “preparation” and therefore the responsibility of parents, and “education” does not start until five.

If we want people to believe that the “education continuum” starts at birth, we must directly challenge the existing impression that education begins at five.

Language will be essential in that effort. Even much of the language used by First 5 plays into the current perception. “Pre-K,” “school readiness,” “pre-school” all suggest preparation, not the main event. We are heartened that a plurality of people in the survey chose the phrase “early learning” as the phrase that was most descriptive of this effort.

III. KEY EARLY BENCHMARKS

Everyone involved in this effort agrees that it will take years to change the public's mindset enough to build strong support for a comprehensive state effort. But what should our goals be for the initial efforts? How can we know if we're making progress? How can we evaluate our performance?

We believe the initial phase of the campaign should focus on moving two precursors for the change sought by the commission:

- Increase the perceived need for California to do more to help children ages zero to five (as measured by questions 3 and 5b in the survey).
- Reduce the age at which people believe the state should offer organized education (as measured by question 11a).

If we can move those numbers, it will mean we are both creating demand and changing the perception that formal education begins at the age of five. Accomplishing these goals will pave the way for making the case on behalf of a greater state role for children in their first five years of life.

Hence, our next phase of advertising (and perhaps several more phases beyond that) will focus explicitly on these two objectives.

IV. CREATIVE APPROACH

Throughout the research process, it has been clear that the answers we got from respondents depended entirely on how the question was framed. Under some frameworks, one might conclude that "early learning" programs were considered both a low priority and relatively unnecessary. However, when the discussion was framed differently, early learning efforts won strong support.

As a result, we believe that initially, the ad campaign should serve to establish the framework for the dialogue and debate that will follow in the coming years. We must define the issues in the ways most likely to generate support for greater state involvement in early learning.

As outlined above, our initial ads will aim to establish the need for a more encompassing approach to "early learning" by educating people about the problem. The research suggests that it may be especially productive to focus on poor performance in K-12 as one of the most significant consequences of inadequate early learning. If we can persuade people that one of the main reasons the K-12 system performs below expectations is our failure to start the education process before the age of five, then we can ultimately make the case that having the state do more for early learning will pay dividends in K-12.

In addition, we believe it is essential to challenge the notion that child development before the age of five is strictly the purview of parents. While there is clearly a great deal of support for a state role in helping "at-risk" children, when it comes to other children, most people believe parents ought to be able to provide for nearly all of a child's needs until then. However, it's crucial that we not overstate the role of government in the early education process. There are certain things parents can do (referring to the parental education component), and there are other things parents need help with. By reinforcing the nature of this symbiotic relationship, we can help to position early learning programs as a way for parents to do their job as parents better.

Our initial creative objectives, then, will be to:

- a. define and create awareness of the problem of insufficient attention to the first 5 years of life,
- b. explicitly challenge the conception that formal education begins at five, and
- c. begin to communicate that the responsibility for early learning cannot rest solely with parents.

We believe that in order to create a long-term change in attitudes, it will be essential to not just inform people; we also want them to think about and discuss the issues. To that end, we want to do everything possible to help people reach their own conclusions, rather than simply force-feed them the information. One of the options we intend to explore are ads that frame questions (e.g.: At what age should formal education begin? What outcome would you expect when one child enters kindergarten able to read, while another cannot?) and then lead people to develop the correct answers on their own.

Ads could also feature ordinary citizens expressing their views on the issues. We believe that using young parents, elementary school teachers, grandparents, and so on, could encourage others to believe that they need not be experts to have an opinion and participate in the discussion.

In order to support the concept of an ongoing dialogue, we may want to incorporate into the campaign an ongoing dialogue with interested members of the public. One obvious way to do that would be to create a chat room within the First 5 website, and end all ads with an invitation to participate: "What do you think? Join the conversation at www.first5.com." Additionally, the site would include key facts that help frame the discussion. We may also want to consider having First 5 staff participate (clearly identified as such) to help point people in the right direction.

Although the campaign will be directed at all audiences (except white men), the research suggests that some groups (primarily better educated, and higher income) may be well-suited to serve as trailblazers in the effort. If the review group supports the strategy, we would want to consider launching a "pre-campaign" aimed at these populations, primarily using print advertising. These ads would have the same objectives as the rest of the campaign to follow, but they could allow us to "prime the pump" by starting the discussion with those audiences who may be most open to it. The primary benefit of using print ads is that they are better suited to a somewhat more detailed exposition of the issues. Such a "pre-campaign" would start perhaps 4 to 6 weeks before the television and radio ads begin.

We hope the strategic direction outlined in this memo is consistent with your own goals and objectives. We look forward to discussing it with you further on Thursday.

GMIMB

◆9