



# Proud #PublicSchoolGrad

## CHALLENGE

The existence of a free public system as a platform for opportunity has been a key component in maintaining the strength of America's democracy, our global economic competitiveness, and our collective and individual progress. Since before World War II, over 90% of Americans and immigrants to America have been educated in our nation's public education system, and for each generation the American public education system has been the launching pad for U.S. presidents, legislators, doctors, clergy, scientists, judges, business leaders, entrepreneurs, musicians, artists and athletes. The public education system continues to be the main platform of opportunity for over 90 percent of our nation's students. The list of sectors enriched through our public education system is as diverse as its students. Simply stated, this critical institution is the vital underpinning needed to provide an opportunity to learn and succeed for all children and to ensure a strong future for our nation.

Yet, today we live in a moment where a burgeoning negative narrative frames the public education system and other supporting public institutions as failures. This "failing" narrative creates critical challenges for the maintenance of public platforms for opportunity. There is clear survey and policy data that indicates the negative framing of public education specifically, and public systems generally, is eroding both public and political support for the maintenance of public opportunity institutions. Most impactfully, years of declining public investments, resulting in cuts to supports and curricula like the arts and music, parallel the "failing" narrative that has come to dominate media and public debates. This dynamic not only poses a threat to students, parents and communities, but to the future availability of a highly skilled, creative, and informed citizenry, workforce and nation.

## STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

The Schott Foundation launched the **#PublicSchoolGrads** Fund to strategically coordinate efforts to strengthen the "public" narrative by highlighting the positive outcomes from our nation's public schools and students. **#PublicSchoolGrads** is a strategic national effort to elevate and reinforce positive narratives about America's public education system by displaying and highlighting the extraordinary talent that exists among our diverse public school students, the next generation of leaders, and by increasing awareness and appreciation for the contributions public schools and their teachers have made to every sector in American society.

The **#PublicSchoolGrads** strategy includes:

- 1) **High visibility local events** highlighting the brilliant talent and accomplishments of existing public school students
- 2) **Engaging celebrity public school graduates** who are leaders in diverse sectors and fields to proclaim pride in their public school education and its contributions to their life and career
- 3) **A national multi-media, multi-platform communications effort** to create an echo chamber to amplify the positive messages and connect across a national campaign



## 1) High-Visibility Local Events Highlighting Talented Public School Students

Local arts, music and skills events — a centerpiece of the initiative — will focus attention on the brilliant talent exhibited by students in public schools, and on diverse leaders in the community who are products of a public school education. The takeaway from each event is an uplifting picture of the students as “works of art” to be treasured and supported by investing in public schools, and a composite picture of proud public school graduates who are contributing in every sector, who help illustrate the “return” on our public investments.

## 2) Engaging Celebrity Public School Graduates in High-Profile Social Media and Online Campaigns

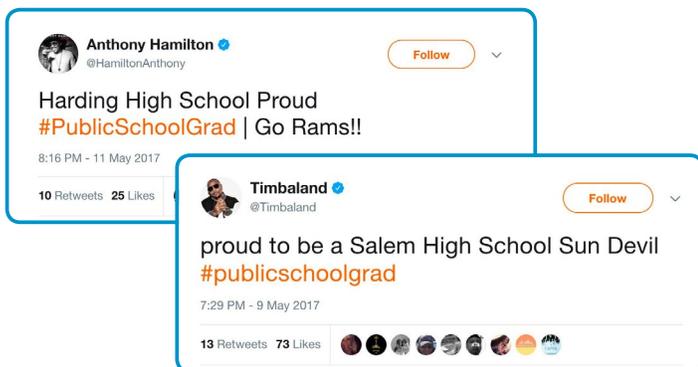
Celebrities within pop culture can play an important role in raising the profile of a campaign or issue on key online and social media platforms. Having educated over 90% of our nation’s students, the American public school system has one of the largest pools of celebrity ambassadors to elevate its success narrative. The early stages of **#PublicSchoolgrads** have already garnered the support of award-winning celebri-

ties Lin Manuel Miranda, Lamman Rucker, Regina King and others including:

- **Andra Day** *Grammy-nominated singer*
- **Anthony Hamilton** *Grammy-winning singer*
- **Regina King** *Emmy-winning TV & film actress*
- **Timbaland** *Grammy-winning producer*

There remains thousands of others from various sectors to engage, including public officials, authors, athletes, philanthropic leaders, ministers, academics and business leaders such as:

- **James Sinegal** *Costco Wholesale Co-founder*
- **Debra Lee** *BET Networks CEO*
- **Jeff Bezos** *Amazon Founder & CEO*
- **Edward Rust** *State Farm Insurance Chairman*



## 3) National Communications Effort to Add Impact to Events and Social Media

The final component includes leveraging the local events and celebrity engagements on a national media platform engaging entities like the Ad Council (a national public service campaign), Google Ads and other broad reach mechanisms to drive traffic to promote the narratives, events and the success of the public school system to our democracy.

**Elevating** a positive narrative about America’s public education system specifically, and public opportunity vehicles generally, is vital to ensuring our democracy and economy remains strong and that all children have the opportunity to learn and to succeed in healthy living and learning communities.

