

***Crucial Conversations About America's Schools***  
**Presented by Dr. John Draper**  
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The Talk: Too many of our high schools are dropout factories—and little progress is being made to improve the graduation rate.

The Truth: Schools are making changes and graduation rates are rising.

The Crucial Conversation: How do we remove the obstacles, identify early, engage at-risk students, provide multiple options, and bring other stakeholders into the effort?

The Talk: Schools aren't closing the achievement gap.

The Truth: Some schools and districts are making substantial gains and the gaps are narrowing. Our achievement gap is really a *Poverty Learning Gap*.

The Crucial Conversation: How do we organize efforts to negate the ill effects of poverty, dysfunctional families, and unsafe communities?

The Talk: Charter schools do a better job of educating kids than do regular public schools.

The Truth: There is mixed research on charter schools but, as a group, they are no more effective than regular schools.

The Crucial Conversation: If schools would benefit from greater flexibility, how can we bring this freedom to all public schools without undermining accountability and teacher support?

The Talk: Kids suffer because poor teachers make the same pay as good teachers.

The Truth: There is insufficient evidence that pay for performance will improve student achievement.

The Crucial Conversation: How can we reward excellence in teaching in a way that is affordable and does not diminish the teamwork and cooperation needed to help students achieve?

The Talk: ACT/SAT test scores are declining—and have been for decades. .

The Truth: Average SAT test scores have declined but in every subgroup scores are up!

The Crucial Conversation: As more lower-performing students take standardized tests, the average will go down. If every child is to graduate, you should expect lower average scores.

The Talk: America's Schools are falling behind on International Test Scores.

The Truth: America's schools are doing slightly better or about the same as they ever have—about average.

The Crucial Conversation: International test scores are not a valid predictor of a nation's success. There are some contests that we don't want to win!

Use the TLC formula to counter the myth of failing public schools. **Talk** about what you believe and why you believe it. **Learn** to use language that reframes the discussion. **Connect** your community to your students using stories.

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