

Crucial Conversations About America's Schools

Reframing Six Critical Conversations

1. **The Talk:** America's Schools are failing.

The Truth: America's schools are among the best in the world. They are, by every measure, better than they have ever been.

The Crucial Conversation: Why does the urban myth of failing schools resonate with the American public? Use the TLC formula to counter the misperceptions. 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.

2. **The Talk:** Too many of our high schools are dropout factories—and we're not making enough progress in addressing this critical problem.

The Truth: Schools and school districts are making changes that are making a difference.

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?

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

The Truth: Some schools and districts are making substantial gains and the gaps are narrowing.

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

4. **The Talk:** Some schools are so bad you have to clear out the staff and start over.

The Truth: There are some broken schools—but thousands have shown significant improvement.

The Crucial Conversation: What is working in struggling schools and how can we recreate the successes that many are experiencing?

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

The Truth: There is no research that charter schools are 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?

6. **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?.

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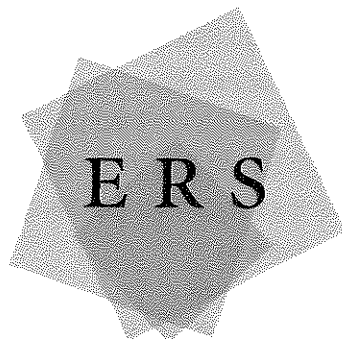
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