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.
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: Choice is a new American value. How do we bring this flexibility to all public schools while maintaining standards and teacher quality?

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—an independent reward system in an interdependent reality is bad business.
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.

For copies of this presentation or more information go to www.johndraper.org.