



CATALYZING CHANGE

A Leader's Guide to The Education Trust's Documentary Dramas

A FRESH APPROACH TO CHANGE

You may be surprised to learn that The Education Trust, long a trusted source for data and policy analyses, is also home to an artist. For over a decade, playwright-researcher Brooke Haycock has produced and performed a powerful series of solo docudramas that illustrate the tough issues surrounding the achievement gap and move audiences in ways that we've seen few approaches match.

Based on interviews with students, educators, and community leaders, these docudramas are designed to illuminate critical issues and spark honest, necessary conversations. We've found that this particular approach, deftly pulling back the data to reveal the real stories behind the numbers, draws in not just heads — but also hearts. And when that happens, powerful change can occur.

"The best presentation I have seen in the 12 years I have been a part of educating youth."

— High school educator,
Howard County, Md.

"I work in the area of discipline and school climate for the district. What I had the privilege of viewing today brought words to the honest conversation that I long to have with so many schools."

— Urban district administrator

If you're looking for something evidence-backed and a little apart from the ordinary to spark conversation, build urgency, and remind people why their work is so important, this may be just the catalyst you're seeking.

THE DOCUDRAMAS

PICKING THE RIGHT DOCUDRAMA

While similar in that all are research-based and student-focused, each EdTrust docudrama is designed to help you start a different kind of conversation. Picking the right docudrama for your audience and issue focus matters. In this section, we describe each of the dramas and how you can use them to advance your work in different areas.

Brooke also works closely with leaders in advance of trainings or events to ensure a performance that delivers the right set of messages in the right tone and at the right time to maximize effectiveness.



AMERICAN GRIT

Advance honest conversations about true college and career readiness with *American Grit*.

Weaving data with narrative drawn from more than 300 interviews with youth, educators, and leaders from higher education, business, and industry, *American Grit* whips into a fever pitch a 100-year-old debate in education about the very role of secondary schools in America and what — and whose — children need to succeed. This docudrama follows cousins Deja and Darnell out the high school doors and deep into a post-industrial America, exposing the fault lines in the rhetoric of college and career readiness “for all” that swallow too many students and shake the very foundation of American prosperity.

“We brought *American Grit* into one of our policy retreats to help us surface internal debates and grapple with what college and career readiness for all students really means.”

—Policy director, national education advocacy organization



SPEAK UNTO US

Examine the policy choices and practice of college and career preparation with *Speak Unto Us*.

Based on more than 200 interviews with educators, industry leaders, advocates, parents, and youth in Louisiana, *Speak Unto Us* follows education policy into practice through the stories of two young men — Tre and Cody — promised a chance through a high school career diploma. But their stories unfold to reveal the human costs of academic under-preparation in a changed America and the dangers of good intentions misaligned.

“We used the show with community and educators to raise awareness on a real issue our children, especially our black boys, are facing and to connect emotionally and reinforce the need for immediate action.”

—State advocate and former educator



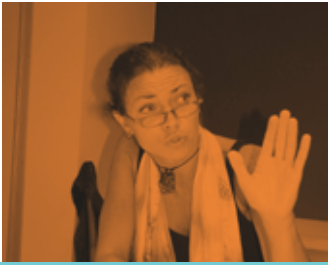
CATALYST

Jumpstart conversation and change in your school with *Catalyst*.

Catalyst is an unflinching portrayal of the power of educators to change students' lives. Following two young men, Carl and Isaiah, *Catalyst* takes on the tough questions of student engagement, bringing audiences face to face with some of the most devastating — and inspiring — images of student transformation. Contrasts in student engagement, institutional power, and individual responsibility project from the stage to an audience that may see its own reflection in some of the characters.

“We used *Catalyst* at a recent symposium on black boys in education. The performance powerfully illustrated much of what was said that day and provided a helpful frame.”

—State advocate



Shake up your teacher education or induction program with *Six Degrees*.

Commissioned by a state body of higher education, *Six Degrees of Preparation* exposes damaging belief systems and practices in school districts and schools of education, vividly portraying their effect on new teachers and the children they serve. Pulling from more than 300 interviews with teachers, teacher candidates, teacher educators, teacher leaders, and students, *Six Degrees* brings issues of teacher preparation, support, and retention into stark relief.

SIX DEGREES OF PREPARATION

“These are issues we really are dealing with. Changing policies around teacher preparation and quality is one thing; changing hearts and minds, that’s tough. We’ve been successful in putting into place, through policy, the infrastructure for change, but we’ve struggled to reach the hearts and minds of our faculties. This show, I believe, does that.”

— School of education dean



Challenge adult expectations with *Dilated Pupils*.

Dilated Pupils and the Not-So-Soft Bigotry of a Nation takes audiences on a whirlwind tour through the high school doors, past the metal detectors, straight into the lives of three high school students. The show powerfully illustrates the devastating effect of low expectations on student achievement, and the need for change now.

DILATED PUPILS AND THE NOT-SO-SOFT BIGOTRY OF A NATION

“This performance is transformative. You can pull a bunch of people together and ask them to change but they need a metaphor for that change. This is that metaphor.”

— High school counselor, Massachusetts



Reinvigorate hard-working, can-do teachers with *Buzz*.

A testimony to hope, hard work, and high expectations, *Buzz* chronicles the educational struggles, and ultimate triumphs, of educators who defy perceptions about what high-poverty schools — and students — can do.

BUZZ

“We needed an inspirational presenter for our fall state conference to remind our people how important our work is — and how urgent.”

— State leader

FOLLOWING THE DRAMA WITH DIALOGUE

While performances last less than an hour, we strongly encourage following each performance with conversation. Post-performance conversations are show and audience-tailored and designed to use the performance or narrative as a vehicle into a closer-to-home reflection among audience members about specific policies, practices, and beliefs that help or hinder students. These dialogues are intended to provide a space to raise questions, reflect on practices, and start hard conversations across classrooms, schools, districts, states, and disparate perspectives.

WHY ED TRUST DOCUDRAMAS WORK

If you're considering including a performance as part of your professional development or improvement strategy or as a conversation starter in your community or state, and you're like us, you want evidence that it works.

The use of theater and storytelling as an education tool pre-dates the PowerPoint — even the slide carousel, for you old-school types — by centuries. And while the ancient Greeks and Egyptians didn't do meta-analyses examining the effects of stories on audiences, researchers in the meantime have. And they've found stories to be a powerful tool.

We combined this evidence with our own docudrama evaluation data — surveys of nearly 1,000 audience members attending our docudramas — and consistently found that:

Stories humanize the data and raise questions.

80 percent of audience members indicated that the performance made them reflect on their own practices “a lot” or “quite a bit.”

“We could all give names to those characters — many of us probably found ourselves resisting seeing some of ourselves in them. We all needed to see this.”

—Dean, school of education

“The combination of data and performance was very powerful. I've never seen anything like it.”

—School administrator, Nevada

Stories mobilize people.

83 percent of audience members indicated that the performance motivated them “a lot” or “quite a bit.”

“We were struggling to get our principals all on board with change efforts. Using the performance at our principal retreat took all the hemming and hawing out of the room so we could move ahead with the actual work.”

— District leader, Washington

“I was that guy. I was one of those teachers. I am going to go back to my classroom tomorrow, and I am going to do some things differently.”

—High school teacher, New Orleans

Stories vividly illustrate complex issues in concrete ways, sparking conversation.

81 percent of audience members indicated that the performance energized them “a lot” or “quite a bit.”

“Brooke Haycock is able to portray some of the most critical problems we face in education today in dramatic and compelling ways. Not only are her portrayals disturbingly real, but they provoke much-needed discussions.”

—Cyndie Schmeiser, former vice president, ACT

“We used Catalyst at a recent symposium on black boys in education. The performance powerfully illustrated much of what was said that day and provided a helpful frame.”

— State advocate, Louisiana

Stories trigger emotional responses and challenge beliefs.

78 percent of audience members indicated that the performance challenged their beliefs “a lot” or “quite a bit.”

“This was really emotional for me. I'm a first-year teacher, and I recognized one of those students on stage as one of my own. I thought, ‘My God, that's [student's name] and I'm doing that to him.’ I needed to see that.”

—High school teacher, Baltimore

“First time I ever teared up during ‘professional development’ and thought about my ability to impact lives.”

—Middle school educator, Providence, R.I.

Stories stick and promote reflection.

79 percent of audience members indicated that the performance caused them to reflect “a lot” or “quite a bit.”

“After seeing that show, I went across the street to the bar to watch the football game — understand, I'm a big football fan — but all I could think about were those kids.”

—Higher education administrator, Florida

“This piece made me think about my own education and the role I play in it. It made me think a lot about my future and not waiting for someone to decide it for me.”

—10th-grader, Arlington, Va.

And stories spark solutions.

When asked about strategies to help students in their own schools who may struggle similarly to those portrayed in the docudrama, many educator audience members ventured beyond simple independent notions of “raising expectations” or “connecting with students” to identify concrete and systemic strategies for supporting struggling students.

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for more information or to book a performance.

