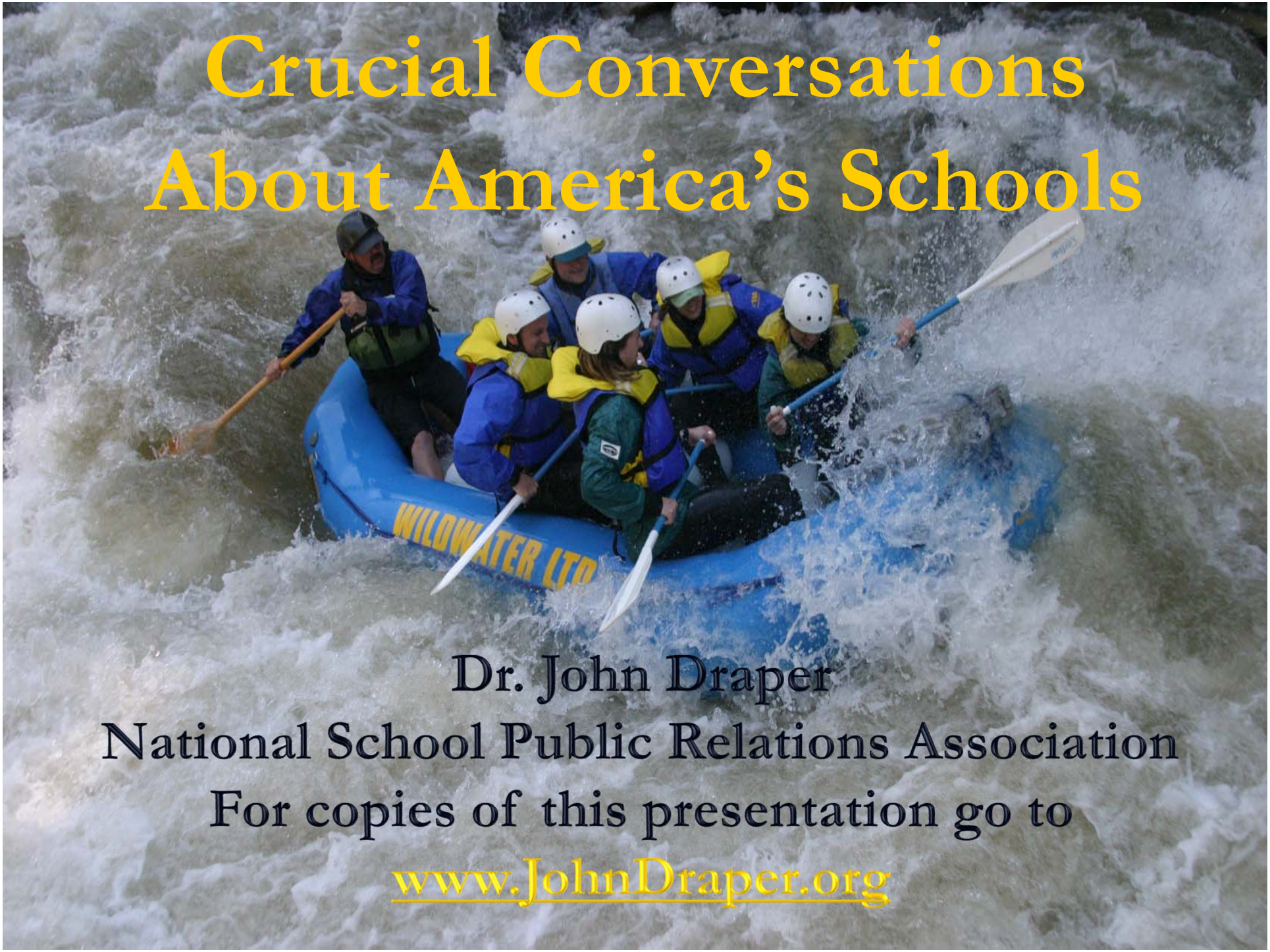
Crucial Conversations About America's Schools



Dr. John Draper
National School Public Relations Association

For copies of this presentation go to

www.JohnDraper.org

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Grandson, son, father . . .

My father was a Methodist minister . . .

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Public schools "National whipping boy"

- *Education Hell: Rhetoric vs Reality* tells the story
- Sputnik to Apollo 11 . . .
- ANAR to the struggling Japanese Economy . . .
- NCLB—the name is negative . . .

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Results from the PDK/Gallup Poll show little change from recent years

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What grade do you give to your oldest child's school?

A/B 77%

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What grade do you give to your local schools?

A/B 49%

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What grade do you give to the nation's schools?

A/B 18%

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So what's the problem? My community thinks our schools are doing pretty good!

Why rock the boat!?!

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There are always more people 'out there' and they think your schools are bad!

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This public myth allows any group of elected officials to act badly toward all public schools!

A Dover Police Department

Public Affairs Production

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Crucial Conversations

The Talk, the Truth and the Crucial Conversation on . . .

- Dropouts/Graduation Rate
- Achievement Gap
- Charter Schools
- Pay for Performance
- SAT Tests
- International Testing

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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.

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The Truth

Schools and school districts are making changes that are making a difference—graduation rates are the highest in history!

Florida is at 81%

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The Crucial Conversation

How do we identify struggling students early, embed remediation, make time flexible, and provide the multiple options needed for every child to graduate?

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The Talk

Public schools are not closing the achievement gap.

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The Truth

Gaps still exist in most schools, but there is some evidence that they are narrowing!

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The Crucial Conversation

Poverty is the greatest common factor among low-achieving children.

We have a Poverty-Learning Gap!

How do we negate the ill effects of poverty, dysfunctional families, and unsafe communities?

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National/Florida F&R

Nationally 50 million students

26 million F&R--51%

Florida has 2.7 million students

1.6 million F&R—58%

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The Talk

Charter schools do a better job educating kids than regular public schools.

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The Truth

There is no research

that charter schools *as a group*

are more effective

than regular schools.

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The Crucial Conversation

Almost two-thirds of the public supports charter schools—they were created to foster innovation and improve instruction.

Choice is a new American Value! How can we bring this flexibility to all public schools?

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The Talk

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

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The Truth

There is no research supporting increased student achievement with performance pay.

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The Crucial Conversation

Three out of four Americans support merit pay for teachers—it's part of the American dream.

How do we develop an affordable system that rewards excellence, but maintains the team spirit required for successful learning communities?

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The Talk

ACT/SAT test scores are declining and have been for decades!

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The Truth

Average ACT/SAT scores have declined . . . but every subgroup of test takers has increased scores!

Simpson's Testing Paradox

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The Crucial Conversation

Average scores on

SAT tests

will show declines

as more students take the tests.

'Every child a graduate'

will mean lower <u>average</u> scores!

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The Talk

America's schools are falling behind on International Tests when compared with other countries.

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The Truth

Our schools have never scored well on International Testing!

In reality we have "fallen up" to about average . . .

which is very good!

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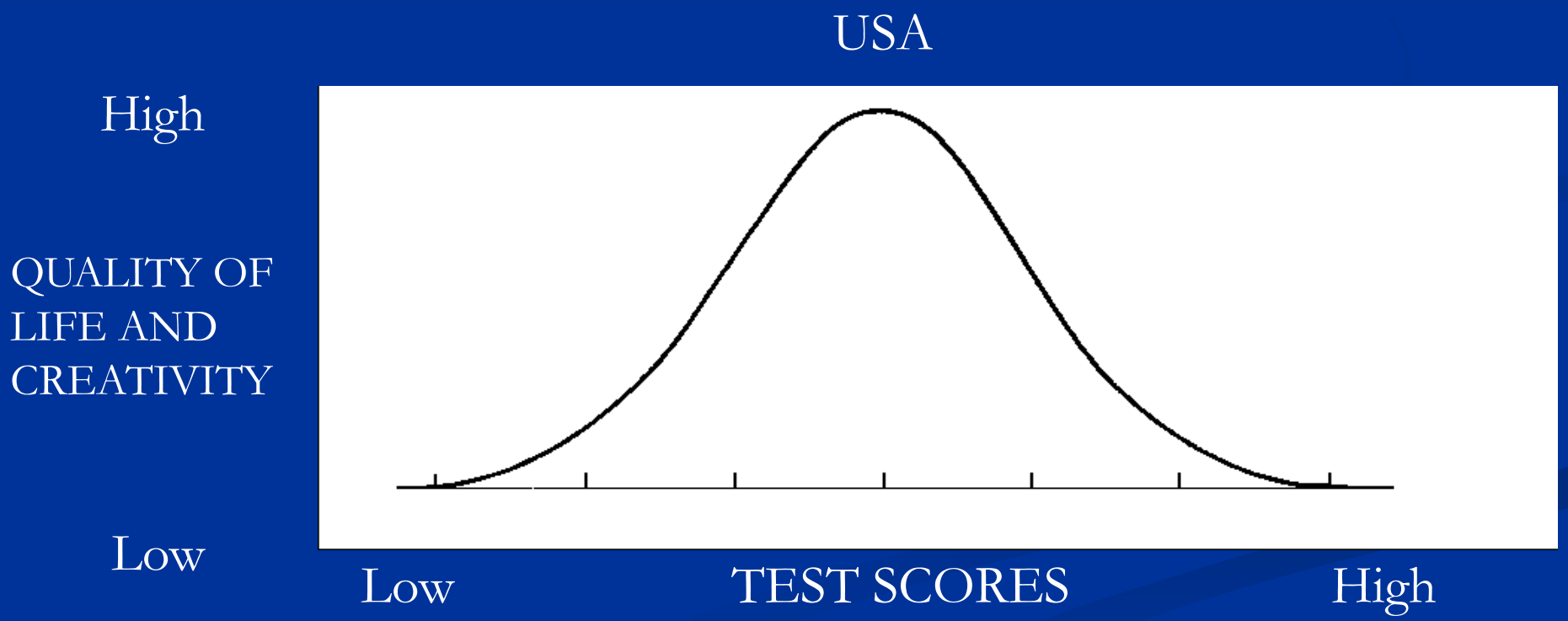
The USA Consistently Ranks at the top on Global Competitiveness Index

The highest scoring countries have fewer patents, copyrights and Nobel Prize winners!

We don't want to be fat or skinny—we want to be healthy!

International Test Scores Are NOT a Valid Predictor of National Success!

(*Catching Up or Leading the Way?* by Yong Zhao)



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What's Happening?

- US is becoming more urban, grayer, browner, debtor nation

  (*Fertilizer, Pills and Magnetic Strips* by Gene Glass)

- Urban--fertilizer and families
- Grayer--medicine and voters
- Browner--baby boomers and children
- Debtor--savings and credit cards
- Arizona and Florida are the trend leaders

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Why Does the Urban Myth of Failing Public Schools Refuse to Die?!

- Only man-made object large enough to be seen from outer space?
- Beware of Halloween candy—apples with . . .
- *Made to Stick*—by Chip and Dan Heath

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A priest and a nun rode together to a 3-day spiritual retreat . . .

What makes the joke funny?

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The TLC Formula

- **Think and Talk about what you believe and why you believe it**
- Learn to use Language that reframes the issues
- Connect your Community to your students using stories

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Belief is Contagious . . . Spread Yours Around!

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Think and Talk About What You Believe

- Every child deserves a quality education regardless of parents or location
- Standardized tests are just one measure of learning—creativity, self-discipline, persistence, imagination, enthusiasm are equally important!

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Think and Talk About What You Believe

- All children can learn—but at different rates with different strengths
- The overwhelming majority of educators are good people who care about children

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Learn to Use Language that Reframes!

- Godless, government schools
- Selfish, union employees
- Leaving little children behind
- Caring, community schools
- Sincere, dedicated professionals
- Every Child Every Chance

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We have the *"Curse of Knowledge"*

- We know the many wonderful things that happen in our schools!
- We need an IEP for that new ODD, ADHD, LD boy, ASAP!
- You don't know what it is like NOT to know what you know!

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Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

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Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

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When you share stories . . .

You overcome the Curse of Knowledge!

You communicate the importance of public schools without confrontation!

What are your school's success stories?

What stories touch your heart?

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Finding the stories . . .

- Each grading period students get a "Successory" form to thank someone who supported their success
- Make the form in duplicate, one for the Successory and one for office
- Office draws a Successory winner for a gift certificate to local restaurant
- Local school selects top 4 or 5 to send to Superintendent for sharing with Board

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Successory [Suhk-ses-uh-ree]

someone who has helped me on my way to success

I am _____, and I am becoming a success @ _____!
name school

I want to thank _____for helping me.
Successory's name

Thank you for: _____

_____

_____

_____

Signed: _____

Sioux City Community Schools
believe... achieve... succeed

Successory [Suhk-ses-uh-ree]

someone who has helped me on my way to success

I am Maria Terrones (name), and I am becoming a success @ North middle (school)!

I want to thank Mrs. Neswick (Successory's name) for helping me.

Thank you for: always caring for me as if I was your daughter. Also helping me become a smart girl and always pushing me to my best. Thank you Mrs. Neswick you were the best teacher ever.

Signed: Maria Terrones

Sioux City Community Schools

believe... achieve... succeed

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Commit to do 4 Things

1. Shift your attention to the positive
2. Never bad-mouth another educator in public
3. Share one positive story per week with your personal network
4. Monitor your progress

(Adapted from *Schools Cannot Do It Alone* by Jamie Vollmer)

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I am on Facebook. In the 80's I taught 7th, 8th and 9th grade science at Calera High School. I had a student named Teri. She recently contacted me on Facebook.

I had you for science in 7th and 8th grade. I left early in 8th grade. There is something I have wanted to tell you for years! Thank you. You gave me the courage to speak out about the sexual abuse I was getting at home. I almost talked to you about it several times, but I was soo afraid. Then, on the last day of 7th grade, you told us to never let anyone define who we are, that people could only treat us badly if we let them!!! I felt like you were talking only to me, and those words gave me the strength to reach out for help. In October of 8th grade I was moved out of that situation.

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I do not remember anything about this former student!

This happened without my knowledge and was just a by-product of the caring environment prevalent in our schools.

It happens every day in your schools, too . . .

and you often don't know it!

If it were not for you I would not have had the courage to get help, and I would not be here today--I had planned out every detail of how to end my life so that I did not have to deal with the pain any longer. You may not remember me and that is ok, because I am not the kid in your science class anymore anyway. I am a mom, wife, sister, and friend. I am an advocate against child abuse. I am many things, but I am no longer a victim, thanks to you!

Sincerely,

Teri

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Miracles Happen Every Day in Public Schools!

Share the Stories

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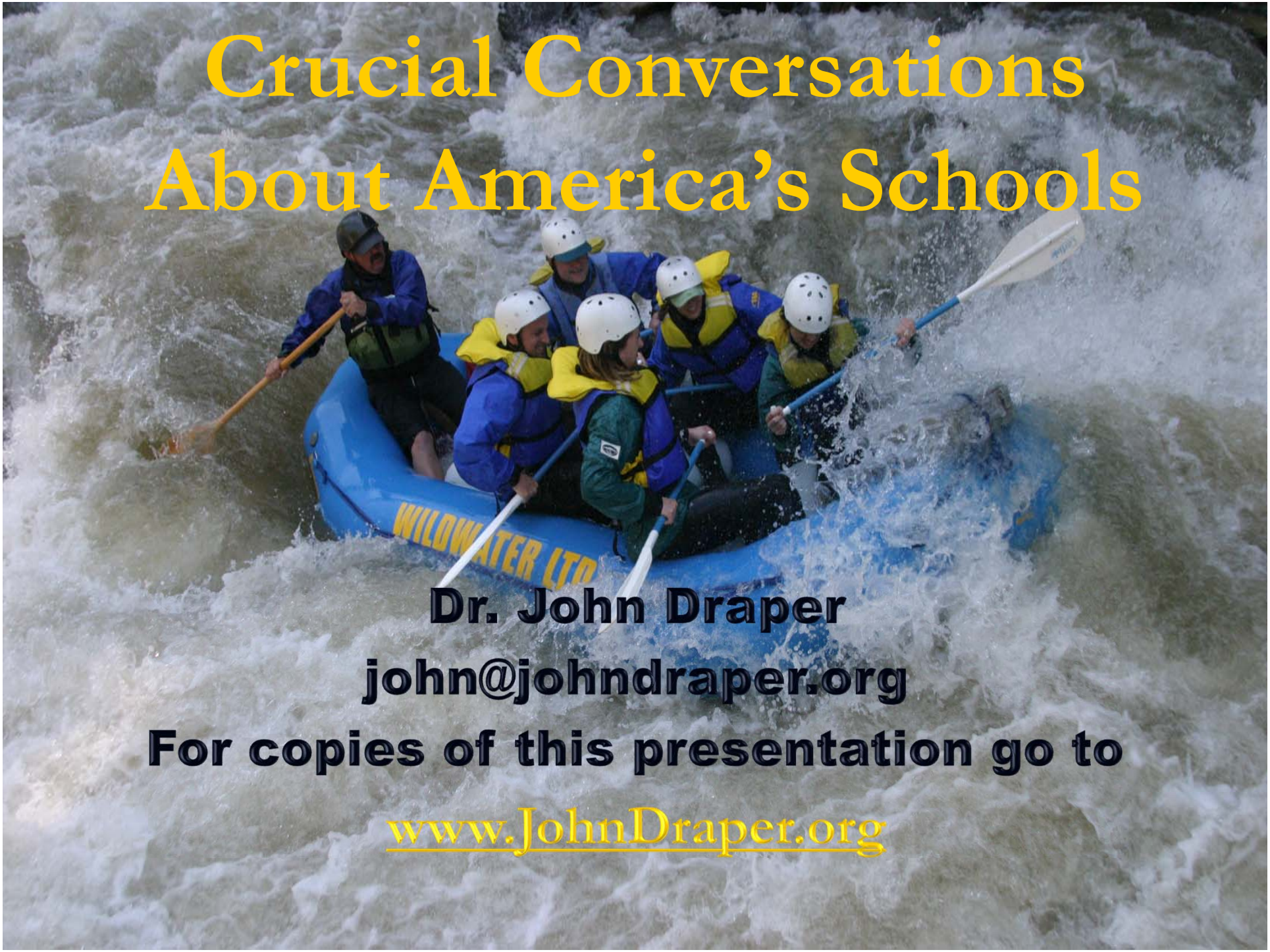

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john@johndraper.org

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