



EPIC

IN-SCHOOL

High School Science  
Playwriting Residency:  
*The Ethics of Innovation*



**GRADE: 10-12**

**COMMON-CORE**

**Achieves Multiple Goals**

**ACADEMIC**

**CIVIC**

**ARTISTIC**

**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL**

# A Playwriting Residency

Exploring the ethics of scientific innovation and discovery.

Based on Epic's award-winning plays "The Winning Side" and "Einstein's Gift," the curriculum centers on an archetypal triangle of Innovator, Enabler, and Doubter, a 3-character play structure that stimulates and elevates student writing.

Students research scientists and/or current ethics issues, from options collaboratively chosen with teachers. Students then write a play in which the three archetypes are represented from the real-life stories of scientists struggling with complex issues.

Student plays can be performed by Epic's professional actors.

**Crafted for  
THE NEW REALITY**

**HYBRID**

**REMOTE**

**SYNC + ASYNC**

**3 Steps**

**ASK**

**RESEARCH**

**CREATE**



**STEP I:**

**ASK**



**STEP I:**

**ASK**

## The Essential Question

An essential question is the foundation. It guides research and encourages deep thinking and learning.

The essential question is like a “clothesline” on which the students hang characters, stories, emotions and ideas. The stronger the clothesline, the more it can support.

In this residency, students’ essential questions are modeled after those asked by professional playwrights, from performances by Epic’s Professional ensemble of artists which students will see.

The Essential Question is...

**OPEN-ENDED**

**NON-JUDGMENTAL**

**THOUGHT-PROVOKING**

**RELEVANT**

**RESONANT**



**STEP 2:**

**RESEARCH**



## STEP 2:

# RESEARCH

## Inspiration

Students analyze two plays, watch actors perform them, and learn what they need to begin researching and writing their own plays.

### *Einstein's Gift*

by Vern Thiessen

This play focuses on *Fritz Haber*, who helped improve crop production and living conditions with his work on nitrogen fixation. His work was later used to produce chlorine gas in WWI. Einstein narrates, and his own ethical struggles around the atomic bomb are simultaneously explored.

### *The Winning Side*

by James Wallert

This play explores American expediency and ethics around the U.S. relationship with *Wernher von Braun*, one of the fathers of NASA after he was a Nazi SS Officer and Chief Rocket Engineer of the Third Reich.



HABER



VON BRAUN





**STEP 2:**

## RESEARCH

### Option 1: Choose a Scientist

Students research a scientist. We have a number of to choose from, who all faced major ethical dilemmas, and often significant regrets, around their inventions or careers. And of course, teachers may select others that best suit their own curriculum.

#### Skills

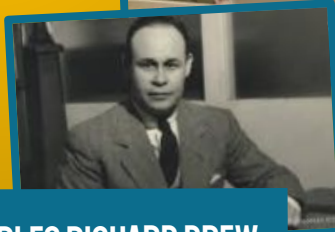
ACADEMIC

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

CIVIC



ALFRED NOBEL



CHARLES RICHARD DREW



ROSALIND FRANKLIN





STEP 2:

## RESEARCH

### Option 2: Choose a Topic

Or, students may research a topic, from options presented by the teachers (from stem-cell research to artificial wombs to CRISPR gene-splicing technology), and write a play in which these three archetypes represented by characters from the real-life stories of scientists struggling with big ethical issues today.

### Skills

ACADEMIC

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

CIVIC



CELL PHONES &  
CANCER



GMO



CRISPR





**STEP 3:**

**CREATE**



**STEP 3:**

**CREATE**

## Write

Students synthesize their research, and write their plays. EPIC mentors lead the way, guiding students in the fundamentals of playwriting: dialogue, subtext, staging and story.

## Skills

**ARTISTIC**

**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL**

**LEARN DIALOGUE**

**LEARN STAGING**

**LEARN SUBTEXT**



**WORK WITH PROFESSIONALS**



**STEP 3:**

**CREATE**

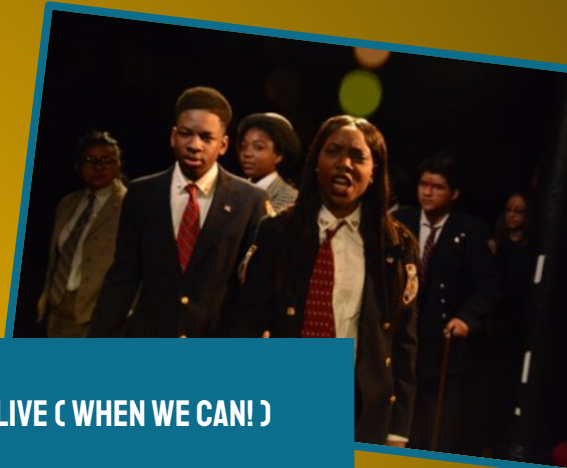
## Perform

At the end of the process, EPIC engages professional actors from the New York theatre world, to perform student plays.

We do this in person when we can, but we can also do it through special, invited live-streaming events, complete with virtual Q&A sessions, or even as pre-recorded performances that students can engage with asynchronously.

## Skills

**ARTISTIC**



**LIVE ( WHEN WE CAN! )**



**STREAMING ONLINE  
( ALWAYS! )**



IT WORKS



## ACADEMICS

### Common Core, Language Art, Grade 11-12

**Reading Informational Text:** RI.11-12.1, RI.11-12.2, RI.11-12.3, RI.11-12.4, RI.11-12.5, RI.11-12.6, RI.11-12.7, RI.11-12.8, RI.11-12.9, RI.11-12.10

**Writing:** W.11-12.1, W.11-12.3, W.11-12.4, W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7

**Speaking & Listening:** SL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.5, SL.11-12.6

CWIKR, SEL, "Close reading of the text"

### AVERAGE RESULTS FROM PARTNER SCHOOLS

29%

**increase** in daily attendance during and following an Epic residency.

30%

**improved cohort-passing** rates.

98%

Average project **completion** rate.

31%

**increase** in State Regents Exam passing rates ( Environmental Science, Chemistry ).

20%

**increase** in the number of students who would consider a **career in the sciences**.



“Thrilled and honored to welcome the brilliant artists of Epic Theatre Ensemble- all NYC Public School students- to perform for staff today. Living proof that art can change our communities and the world.”

— Chancellor Richard A. Carranza, New York City Public Schools

“This is dope! I love it!”

— High School  
Principal



“Our students learned so many important skills in this one project. I am so proud of the work we’ve done together as a class during such a stressful time.”

— ELA teacher

“I hated being online. It was a lot of emotions, but good thing I was able to have these conversations with my family and Epic. Thank God for Epic. It has really been my happy place.”

— Student





“EPIC helped to build a more comprehensive narrative around the issue of school segregation and integration. It helped us center the public policy work in youth voices across the city.”

- **Matt Gonzales, Founder and Director of the Integration and Innovation Initiative (i3) at NYU Metro Center**



“I observed young people start at a very untutored place on the growth continuum as they sped down the line to accomplished researchers and actors, and I was stunned. The growth was extreme, and the sense of accomplishment by all concerned was exceptional.”

- **Amy Stuart Wells, Director of The Public Good at Teachers College, Columbia University**





**HYBRID**

**REMOTE**

**SYNC + ASYNC**

## Crafted for The New Reality

Three levels, accommodating any classroom situation.

### 6 SESSIONS

Asynch, self-contained and pre-recorded. teachers lead in their own time.

### 12 SESSIONS

Building on the 6 session track, EPIC leads more in-depth sessions in real time. In-person, hybrid or fully remote.

### 18 SESSIONS

Building on the 6 and 12 session tracks, EPIC leads the most in-depth sessions in real time. In-person, hybrid or fully remote.



# Who is EPIC?

For 20 years, Epic has made theatre that empowers young people. Our artists are equal parts cyphers and mentors: they create and amaze; they teach and inspire; they translate the struggles of history into lessons for our future; they operate in the center of the civic dialogue. We value youth voice deeply, because we share a youthful passion for justice; we believe that theatre that embraces this passion transforms audiences from passive bystanders into active participants forging a more inclusive and collaborative vision of America.

Epic's artists make theatre radically accessible, annually engaging thousands of students in Title I schools and first-time audiences in the transformative process of telling their own stories and learning to deeply empathize with those of others. At Epic, this high level of inclusiveness fosters artistic rigor and quality in all of our programs, mirroring the extraordinary work of our professional stages. Recognition for education at Epic includes the Coming Up Taller Award from the Obama White House and 18 years of National Endowment for the Arts funding.



# Thanks!

For more information or to design a program  
for your school, contact:

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[www.epictheatreensemble.org](http://www.epictheatreensemble.org)