

FORGOTTEN SCHOOLS

AMERICA'S QUIET CRISIS

OFFICIAL PRESS KIT

WORLD PREMIERE
OCTOBER 6, 2026
CREST THEATRE • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

A BROOKS BROADCASTING LLC PRODUCTION

Film at a Glance

Title: Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis

Format: Feature-length documentary

Genre: Documentary / Education / Social Issues

Country: United States

Language: English

Year: 2026

Production Company: Brooks Broadcasting LLC

World Premiere: October 6, 2026 - Crest Theatre, Sacramento, California

Official Website: ForgottenSchools.com

Runtime and final technical exhibition specifications will be added when the master is locked.

Logline

Across rural America, schools serve as the heart of their communities while confronting challenges that often go unseen in the national conversation. Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis brings audiences inside these communities to meet the students, families, educators, and leaders working to ensure that where a child lives does not determine the opportunities they receive.

Press Contact

Diana Silva

Office Manager, Brooks Broadcasting, LLC.

1-888-380-8777

info@brooksbroadcasting.com

Diana Silva, Office Manager: dsilva@brooksbroadcasting.com

dsilva.brooksbroadcasting@gmail.com

Synopsis

Short Synopsis

Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis is a feature-length documentary exploring the challenges, resilience, and extraordinary importance of rural schools. Through the voices of students, families, educators, school leaders, and community members, the film examines realities ranging from funding inequities and staffing shortages to declining enrollment, transportation costs, access to specialized services, and the growing pressure on small districts to accomplish more with fewer resources.

But Forgotten Schools is not simply a story about what rural schools lack. Set against the striking landscapes and close-knit communities of rural California, the documentary captures the relationships, traditions, resilience, and profound sense of community that make these schools remarkable.

At its heart, the film asks a fundamental question: Does every child in America truly have access to the same educational opportunities, regardless of where they live?

Long Synopsis

Millions of American children attend schools in rural communities, yet their experiences are often missing from conversations about the future of public education. Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis takes audiences beyond statistics and policy debates and into the schools and communities living these realities every day.

The documentary introduces audiences to educators, students, families, superintendents, and community members working to sustain schools that often serve as much more than places of instruction. These schools are community institutions. Generations of families pass through their classrooms. Teachers know their students and their families. School events become community events. In many small towns, the local school is one of the institutions holding the community together.

Behind that sense of connection lies another reality. Rural districts can face staffing shortages, declining enrollment, transportation expenses, limited access to specialized programs, challenges serving students with disabilities and English learners, and funding structures that can leave neighboring communities operating with dramatically different resources.

Rather than defining rural schools by deficits, Forgotten Schools examines inequity while allowing the people living these experiences to tell their own stories. The result is both a celebration and a warning: a portrait of extraordinary communities doing remarkable work for children while confronting circumstances that raise difficult questions about educational opportunity in America.

Why This Film

The origins of Forgotten Schools began outside a film studio. Producer and creator Dr. Jeremy Brooks spent years working in public education as a teacher and administrator and later became involved in educational policy and legislative advocacy.

While serving in legislative policy work representing communities that included rural California, Dr. Brooks became increasingly aware of challenges facing rural school districts that received comparatively little attention in broader conversations about education. The numbers were significant, but conversations with rural educators and school leaders made the issue personal.

At the same time, the production encountered communities characterized by dedicated educators, deeply rooted families, remarkable resilience, and enormous pride in their schools. That contradiction became the foundation for Forgotten Schools: examine inequity without defining rural schools by their struggles, and celebrate these communities without ignoring the challenges confronting them.

“Rural schools educate millions of students across the country who are kind of overlooked in conversations. One out of five students attend a rural school. A lot of people don’t realize it.”

— Dr. Jeremy Brooks

The Setting

Rural California provides a striking backdrop for Forgotten Schools. Among the communities featured prominently is Calaveras County, where small towns, mountain communities, historic schools, and generations of families illustrate both the character and complexity of rural education.

“Calaveras is a beautiful area with dedicated educators and it represents a lot of strengths we see in rural America but the county is also facing challenges and serves as an example of broader issues facing schools nationwide.”

— Dr. Jeremy Brooks

Issues & Impact

- School funding and resource inequities
- Teacher and staff shortages
- Declining enrollment
- Transportation and geographic isolation
- Special education services
- English learner services
- Access to programs and educational opportunities
- Facilities and infrastructure
- Financial pressures confronting small school districts
- The consequences of one-size-fits-all education policy

More Than a Crisis

The title *Forgotten Schools* speaks to schools too often overlooked in education conversations. But the documentary does not portray rural communities as places without hope. Throughout production, the filmmakers encountered educators doing extraordinary things with limited resources, families with generations of connections to their schools, students proud of their communities, and leaders determined to create opportunities for children.

The film examines what rural schools are fighting against - and what they are fighting for.

Intended Impact

The purpose of *Forgotten Schools* extends beyond documenting a problem. The filmmakers hope the documentary creates conversations in schools, communities, legislatures, universities, educational organizations, and homes. The film asks audiences to look more closely at communities that are easy to overlook and to consider what educational equity means when opportunity varies from one community to another.

“People need to see more about what life out here is.”

— Louise Simson, Superintendent, Mark Twain Union Elementary School District

“My hope for the film is that it can put a spotlight on the inequities.”

— Louise Simson, Superintendent, Mark Twain Union Elementary School District

Accessible Storytelling

Forgotten Schools was designed to reach beyond educators. School finance, enrollment, public policy, and education funding can quickly become complicated subjects. The film therefore combines personal stories with accessible explanations intended for educators, families, students, community members, and policymakers alike.

A special animated sequence features actor and narrator John Morris, best known as the original voice of Andy in Disney and Pixar's Toy Story films. The sequence is designed to make a complicated aspect of school finance understandable to a broad audience, including young people.

“When you talk about school finances - it is complicated - we wanted it to be for everyone, including for students, and to explain in a way that is worded so that children can understand.”

— Dr. Jeremy Brooks

Featured Voice Talent

John Morris

Forgotten Schools features a special animated sequence narrated by actor John Morris, widely recognized as the original voice of Andy in Disney and Pixar's Toy Story franchise. Morris also voiced Santa Boy in Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas. His participation brings a familiar voice associated with generations of childhood to a sequence focused on helping audiences understand educational opportunity and school finance.

Selected Participants

The documentary features students, families, educators, community members, and educational leaders. Selected education leaders participating in the film include:

Jared Hungerford

Superintendent

Calaveras County Office of Education

Ron Estes

Interim Superintendent

Calaveras Unified School District

Scott Nanik

Superintendent

Bret Harte Union High School District

Louise Simson

Superintendent

Mark Twain Union Elementary School District

Additional students, families, educators, school leaders, and community members appear throughout the documentary.

“Rural schools are really cool - and do some really wonderful things and involve generational families’ institutional legacies and pride.”

— Louise Simson

Collaborating School Districts & Education Partners

Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis was made possible in part through the cooperation of education agencies, school districts, superintendents, educators, students, families, and community members who opened their schools and communities to the production. Their collaboration helped the filmmakers document rural education through the voices and experiences of the people who know these communities best.

Calaveras County Office of Education

Jared Hungerford

County Superintendent of Schools

Calaveras Unified School District

Dr. Ronald Estes

Interim Superintendent during production

Bret Harte Union High School District

Scott Nanik

Superintendent

Mark Twain Union Elementary School District

Louise Simson

Superintendent

The production gratefully acknowledges these education partners for their cooperation, access, and willingness to help bring the realities, strengths, and challenges of rural education to a broader audience.

Production Team

Dr. Jeremy Brooks

Producer / Creator

Dr. Jeremy Brooks is an educator, educational leader, broadcaster, media entrepreneur, and documentary filmmaker whose work bridges education, public policy, and storytelling. His career in education and educational advocacy provided the foundation for Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis.

Dr. Brooks is the creator and host of The Education Talk Show, an international education media program that has reached audiences in more than 47 countries and helped build an online community of more than 300,000 subscribers. He is the founder and CEO of Brooks Broadcasting LLC. Forgotten Schools marks his first feature-length documentary project.

Aviette Brooks

Producer

Aviette Brooks is an educator and media producer whose professional experience spans classroom teaching, instructional coaching, school administration, and live digital media production.

As a producer of The Education Talk Show, Brooks has helped coordinate live, multi-camera productions and has experience working in the program's production control room, overseeing elements of the technical and creative execution of live programming. The program has reached approximately 1.6 million viewers and listeners across more than 47 countries and has built an online audience of more than 300,000 subscribers.

Her experience as a teacher, instructional coach, and school administrator brings firsthand knowledge of schools and educational leadership to a documentary centered on students, educators, families, and educational opportunity.

Production Team

Michael Heinze

Director

Michael Heinze is a director and performer whose creative experience spans theater, film, commercial work, and digital media production. Heinze has also worked on The Education Talk Show, contributing to productions reaching an international audience and developing experience alongside members of the production team behind Forgotten Schools.

His stage experience includes productions such as The Grapes of Wrath, Frankenstein, and Bocca. He has also appeared in commercial productions and the independent film MegaBucks. Heinze holds a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts.

As director of Forgotten Schools, Heinze brings his background in performance and visual storytelling to a documentary built around authentic voices and experiences, balancing complex educational issues with the human stories at the film's center.

Ryan Sheeley

Technical Director

Ryan Sheeley brings experience in live production, technical direction, and digital broadcasting to Forgotten Schools. While attending Penn State University and working toward a bachelor's degree in telecommunications, Sheeley assisted with the production of a sports program in Pennsylvania, gaining experience in the technical demands of live media production.

He has also served as a technical director for The Education Talk Show, helping execute live, multi-camera productions reaching audiences around the world. For Forgotten Schools, Sheeley brings that experience to the technical execution of a feature-length documentary.

A Collaborative Production

The core production team brings together backgrounds spanning education, educational leadership, live broadcasting, theater, filmmaking, and technical production. Several members developed their working relationship through The Education Talk Show before bringing that collaborative experience into feature-length documentary filmmaking.

Brooks Broadcasting LLC

Brooks Broadcasting LLC is a California-based media and production company focused on storytelling at the intersection of education, leadership, culture, and community.

The company's work includes original broadcast programming, digital media, live productions, and documentary filmmaking. Its flagship education media platform has reached audiences in more than 47 countries and built an online audience of more than 300,000 subscribers.

Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis represents the company's first feature-length documentary.

Selected Press

“A labor of love documentary on rural education challenges.”

— Tori James, Calaveras Enterprise

‘Forgotten Schools’ Film Brings Focus to Local Education’s Current Unmet Needs

Tori James | Calaveras Enterprise | July 9, 2026

The article examines the origins of the documentary, its filming in Calaveras County, participating educational leaders, and the filmmakers’ goal of bringing greater attention to rural educational inequities.

Press-page link to the full article can be added to the digital version of this kit.

World Premiere

OCTOBER 6, 2026

CREST THEATRE
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Forgotten Schools: America's Quiet Crisis will make its official premiere at Sacramento's historic Crest Theatre. The premiere will bring together educators, educational leaders, community members, policymakers, organizations, members of the media, participants in the documentary, and invited guests.

Additional screenings, festival appearances, and distribution information will be announced.

Media Assets & Inquiries

The following materials are available for media, festival, educational, and promotional use:

- Official key art / film poster
- High-resolution production stills
- Behind-the-scenes photography
- Filmmaker headshots
- Official trailer
- Film logo
- Short and long synopsis
- Filmmaker biographies
- Production credits
- Interview opportunities
- Screening information

Press & Media Inquiries

Diana Silva
Office Manager
Brooks Broadcasting, LLC.

Email: info@brooksbroadcasting.com
Diana Silva, Office Manager: dsilva@brooksbroadcasting.com
dsilva.brooksbroadcasting@gmail.com
Phone: 1-888-380-8777

Brooks Broadcasting (Executive Plaza Building)
965 E. Yosemite Ave., Suite 23D
Manteca, CA 95336

ForgottenSchools.com

Publication Notes

This press kit reflects information supplied by the production and published coverage available to the filmmakers as of August 2026. Final runtime, complete production credits, technical exhibition specifications, festival selections, and distribution information should be added as those items are finalized.

FORGOTTEN SCHOOLS

AMERICA'S QUIET CRISIS

Millions of students attend rural schools.

Their schools educate generations.

They anchor communities.

They create opportunity.

And too often, their stories remain outside the national conversation.

IT IS TIME TO SEE THEM.

A BROOKS BROADCASTING LLC PRODUCTION
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