Thanks to the generous support of the Berry Fund, the Denver Project for Humanistic Inquiry (D-phi) was able to engage over 150 high school students in an event that used a theatrical performance as a springboard for philosophical reflection.

D-phi is a center for public humanities, housed within the Department of Philosophy at Metropolitan State University of Denver, which offers thoughtful public programing designed to promote public engagement with and understanding of a broad range of timely and timeless issues. We have long sought to involve high school students in our events and discussions, but in the past our efforts often hit with various logistical obstacles. Support from the Berry Fund allowed us to overcome these obstacles. Instead of bringing students to the theater, this time we were able to bring the theater to the students. This not only enabled us to make the event accessible to a much larger group of high school students, it also gave us the ability to customize the performance, ensuring that it was both appealing to students and ripe for philosophical analysis.

Beginning in early February 2019, a group of philosophers began working with the creative team at the Buntport, a local non-profit theater company, in order to generate ideas for a performance that would stimulate philosophical discussion among high school students. In the end, we settled on a performance that was built around a series of satirized “TED talks” that raised questions about the nature of success, creativity, expertise and authority.

On Thursday, April 25th, these mock “TED talks” were performed for large groups of 10th, 11th and 12th graders enrolled in Theater, Speech and Debate classes at East High School in Denver. The performance was introduced by philosophers from MSU Denver and Regis University. After the performance, several of the writers joined the group of philosophers on stage to conduct a conversation about the themes.

Expenses:
4 performers (3hrs) $25/hr $300
1 technician (3hr) $25/hr $75
Research, rehearsal, creation $255
Equipment use/rental $150
Transportation $30
Guest speakers $200
Subtotal: $1,010