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## *Can Your Kids Compete?*

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**Goal:** To provide participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to empower and inspire their children to effectively compete in the global marketplace

**Objective 1:** Make participants aware of the changing nature of academic and economic competition their children are facing

**Objective 2:** Provide participants with practical strategies for improving their children's odds of being successful

*Our world is shrinking. Are your children prepared to compete with their peers around the world for scholarships and jobs? This session will provide parents and guardians with strategies for improving your child's ability to compete for scholarships and employment.*

### **A snapshot of our changing academic and workplace landscape:**

America remains the most innovative and creative nation on earth—but other nations and their students are catching up fast, especially in the future-friendly fields of mathematics and science.

- American 15-year-olds ranked 24th out of 29 developed nations in mathematics literacy and problem-solving on the most recent Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] test.
- Only 7 % of America's 4th- and 8th-graders reached the "advanced" level on the 2003 Trends in International Math and Science Study [TIMSS] test; by contrast, 38 % of Singaporean 4th-graders and 44 % of 8th-graders did.

Other nations also have an edge in foreign language instruction, a key to improved national security and global understanding.

- While only 44 % of U.S. high school students studied a foreign language in 2002, learning a second or third foreign language is compulsory for students in the European Union and elsewhere.
- More than 200 million children in China study English—while only 24,000 elementary and secondary school children in the U.S. study Chinese.
- Less than 8 percent of undergraduates in American universities take foreign language courses.

To remain a global leader in this highly competitive world, U.S. colleges and universities need freshmen students ready to learn math and science from day one. And U.S. employers, whether filling "white collar" or "blue collar" positions, need workers with "pocket-protector" skills—practical problem-solvers fluent in today's technology.

- 90 % of the fastest-growing jobs will require some education beyond high school. (U.S. Dept of Labor)
- If current trends continue, by 2012 over 40 % of factory jobs will require education beyond high school. (National Association of Manufacturers)
- Fewer than half of high school graduates in 2005 were ready for college-level math and science courses. (ACT)
- An applicant for a production associate's job at a modern automobile plant must have math skills equivalent to the most basic achievement level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test—a threshold that almost half of our 17-year-olds do not meet.

(Source: <http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/competitiveness/expanding-apip.html>)

- An estimated 582,000 foreign students were admitted to the United States in 2002- about 4.3 percent of total enrollment - including 6,692 in Colorado. (Source: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=34990>)
- China is reporting a 15% increase in the number of applications for student visas (Source: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=70833>)

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Five critical actions parents can take to prepare their kids to effectively compete...

### **INCREASE FACE TIME**

**Reality:** We are living in a global market that will require us to interact with people from a broad spectrum of cultural and ethnic backgrounds that will be quite different from our own.

A couple of examples:

- Prairie Middle School has children from 70 countries speaking 58 different languages.
- One-third of Microsoft engineers are from India

**Implications:** Students who will be successful in the future will be those who develop great interpersonal skills, who learn to interact with a wide variety of cultures, who can adapt to changing and challenging situations quickly, and who have great problem solving skills.

**Strategies:**

- Eat more meals together (5-6 a week, breakfast, lunch or dinner) – This provides a great opportunity for communication, bonding as a family as well teaching the importance of building and maintaining relationships. Studies show that students who frequently ate meals with their family performed better in school ([www.mealsmatter.org/EatingForHealth/Topics/article.aspx?articleId=4](http://www.mealsmatter.org/EatingForHealth/Topics/article.aspx?articleId=4)).
- Discourage practices that encourage anti-social behaviors
  - Many kids have their own room, that contains their own TV, computer, I-Pod with headphones, and telephone. Why do they ever need to interact with their family or the rest of the world?
- Help them develop positive conflict resolution skills.

### **DECREASE PASSIVE LEARNING**

**Reality:** Advancements in technology and the increase in media offerings (TV, movies, internet) have resulted in our children are becoming increasingly passive in their education and learning styles. Instead of students having to know how to think about where to find information, now all they have to do is type the desired information into an Internet search engine and with practically no effort, they are given all of the information they need.

**Implications:** Students are spending more time being given information rather than having to find and process it on their own. They are becoming sponges that absorb information without the ability to critically evaluate their culture and environment.

**Strategies:**

- Help your child develop critical thinking skills

*Perhaps most importantly in today's information age, thinking skills are viewed as crucial for educated persons to cope with a rapidly changing world. Many educators believe that specific knowledge will not be as important to tomorrow's workers and citizens as the ability to learn and make sense of new information. —D. Gough, 1991*

- Have more conversations with your child – Don't give answers, but ask them to explain their decisions and conclusions to you. Challenge them to critically look at their world, to identify the messages being given and the assumptions being made.
- Teach them that “just because” is not an answer to the question “why?”

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### BROADEN WORLDVIEW

**Reality:** At a time when our world is shrinking and cultural walls of division are being dismantled,

**Implications:** If our children's view of and knowledge about the world and their place in it is not keeping pace with the rapid changes that are taking place, they will not possess the skills or perspectives be able to compete in a global market.

**Strategies:**

- Encourage a wider range of experiences
  - *Academic* – Learn a foreign language
  - *Cultural* – Invest in a family pass to the **museum** (<http://www.dmns.org/main/en/General/Memberships/Overview/>) or **zoo** ([www.denverzoo.org/involved/membership.asp](http://www.denverzoo.org/involved/membership.asp)). Each is about \$75.00/year.
  - *Entertainment* – Watch something other than “Black” shows or movies. They often reinforce the stereotypes of African-Americans being obsessed with sex, money and materials or as comics, athletes, playas, and bangers. Go to see plays and not just movies or videos.
  - *Reading* – What are the magazines in your house? A subscription to *National Geographic for Kids* is only \$15.00/year ([www.nationalgeographic.com/magazines/index.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazines/index.html)).
- Teach your children to want to experience and value other cultures. One way to do this is to introduce foods from different countries and tell them something about it at the family meal.
- Buy a world map and post it in a location where your children can have easy access to it. Identify cities and countries that are mentioned in the news or newspaper or are the places of origin of people you meet.

### ERASE IGNORANCE

"Children can't achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white." -- Barack Obama, keynote speech, 2004 Democratic National Convention

**Reality:** Many minority students in overwhelmingly white school systems are experiencing tremendous peer pressure from fellow minorities to *not* achieve. Examples:

- A former Prairie student, an African-American senior at Eaglecrest High School, is President of the Junior National Honor Society. Some of his African-American friends stand outside of his AP classes and tease him. He has been labeled, “that smart nigger.”
- An African-American student at Thunder Ridge Middle School is given a hard time by his friends for playing baseball because that is a “White” sport., A African-American student at Ponderosa is given the same treatment because he is playing tennis.
- In an assembly with African-American students at Prairie I asked them define the term “acting White.” It was defined as speaking good English (enunciation, less slang), excelling in school (striving to get good grades, taking AP classes), having white friends). My response – “If this is acting White, what then, is ‘acting Black?’ ”

**Implications;** We must challenge our children to resist the temptation to equate the striving for success and achievement with a denying one's heritage or cultural identity.

**Strategies:**

- Give your children a strong sense of their history and culture so that they can feel good about who they are while pursuing academic achievement with pride and a sense of responsibility to their heritage.
- Find your child a “near-peer” mentor (a slightly older student) who has experienced this pressure. This gives your child an ally who support and encourage them through the process.

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## RAISE THE BAR OF EXPECTATION

Creating an "achievement culture"

- **Get involved with schools**
  - If you don't show an interest in school and your children's education, why will your children?
  - Your involvement matters — a lot. Research shows that students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher level programs, be promoted and earn credits, attend school regularly, have better social skills, and graduate and go on to college.
  - How can you get involved?
    - Volunteer in classroom, office, etc.
    - PTCO
    - PAC Meetings
    - Participate in Back-to-school nights
    - Attend parent-teacher conferences
    - Attend assemblies
  
- **Raise your own expectations**
  - What is your attitude about your children's ability to achieve?
  - *"Too many adults make negative assumptions regarding the academic potential of black children. Too many black youngsters assume that academic excellence isn't a black thing. And too many black parents sit helplessly by as their children succumb to negative peer pressure."* – William Raspberry, *Washington Post*
  - Encourage your children to take AP and honors courses. It is better to get a B or C in one of these courses than to get an A in a course that does not challenge or advance them.
  
- **Honor academic excellence** with the same (if not greater) energy that you honor athletic excellence
  
- **Involve your community**
  - *Get involved in your community*
    - Start a mentoring or tutoring program through your church, organization or business
    - Get involved with an existing program such as Whiz Kids ([www.whizkidstutoring.com/](http://www.whizkidstutoring.com/)) or Save Our Youth ([www.saveouryouth.org/](http://www.saveouryouth.org/))
    - *"I mean, if the pastors would get up in the pulpit and say 'we're going to make sure that every child in this church reads; we ain't having no nonreaders in this congregation,' you've got enough retirees who can read, and probably some retired schoolteachers, and so forth, so you could organize a real effort and then honor the children who excel academically."* – Hugh Price
  
  - *Learn from your community*: Learn from the experience of others.
    - Come together with other parents to share wisdom as to how to encourage, empower and motivate your children to succeed in school.
  
    - *"Some children have learned to blow off peer pressure; they can tell us how they did it. Some uneducated parents have learned to use mother wit to steer their children academically; they can tell us how they did it. And those of us who grasp the importance of the things I'm talking about need to reach out and help bring along those who don't."* – Hugh Price

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## Resources

### Books

- *Overcoming the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African-American Young Women*, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski
- *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African-American Males*, Dr. Freeman Hrabowski
- *Achievement Matters*, Hugh Price,
- *Strength for Their Journey: 5 Essential Disciplines African-American Parents Must Teach Their Children and Teens*, by Robert L. Johnson
- *Learning While Black: Creating Educational Excellence for African American Children*, by Janice Hale
- *Developing Positive Self-Images and Discipline in Black Children*, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
- *State of Emergency: We Must Save African American Males*, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
- *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys, Vol. III*, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
- *Developing Positive Self-Images and Discipline in Black Children*, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
- *Black Students / Middle Class Teachers*, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
- *Keeping Black Boys Out of Special Education*, Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu

### Websites

- [www.bridges4kids.org](http://www.bridges4kids.org)
- **Resources For Parents** ([www.cpirc.org](http://www.cpirc.org) - click on “Resources” then “Resources for Parents”)  
This page offers you information and resources designed for parents. There are easy to read tip sheets and power point presentations to give parents ways to help their children with school at home.