



**Sen. Barack Obama American Competitiveness Summit
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**Statement by Eli Broad
Founder of The Broad Foundations**

Many Americans remember the good old days when the United States was #1 in high school graduation rates. That was 40 years ago. Today, we have dropped to #21 among industrialized nations.

If we want to regain our competitive position in the world... if we want to maintain our standard of living... we need to revamp public education.

There are **six things** America needs to do to revamp our public schools.

First, **more learning time.**

We are short-changing our students. American students get only two-thirds of the academic hours of their international counterparts. Our students spend six hours a day, 180 days a year in school, while countries like South Korea educate their students for 225 days, and Italian students attend class 210 days.

After school, while students in other countries do homework, our children spend 6 to 7 hours a day watching television and playing video games. We need a longer school year and a longer school day.

Second, **better teaching.**

Countries like Finland, Singapore and Canada recruit their teachers from the top third of college graduates. We don't.

We need to give the teaching profession more respect.

We need to offer financial incentives to teachers and schools who outperform.

And we need differential pay for math and science teachers and for those who teach in our most challenging schools.

Third, **stronger American standards.**

Children need to know English, math, science and history regardless of whether they are from Pittsburgh, Pensacola, or Portland. Why should high school students in the State of Washington be required to take only



two years of math, while students in Ohio must take four years? We need a national curriculum at least in math and science.

Fourth, public school choice.

Different students need different education options and choices. To make smart choices, parents need useable data so they can determine which public or public charter school best fits the needs of their child.

Fifth, 21st century vocational and technical education.

We want all children to go to college. But by the 8th or 9th grade, many students do not see college as an option... so they don't see the point of staying in school and graduating.

To reduce the dropout rate, we must offer these children 21st century vocational education so they have access to a better life and high-paying jobs...like auto mechanics, electricians, plumbers and utility workers...jobs that can't be outsourced.

Sixth, governors and big city mayors must be held accountable for educating our children.

As the nation's key education leaders, governors and mayors need the authority to implement policies that will dramatically improve their state's public schools – and they need to be held accountable for improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

The next President of the United States will have to tackle a number of competitiveness challenges – the economy, national security, energy, healthcare and education.

We need an education system that prepares our students for life – and our country -- for success in the 21st century.

This is an American issue that affects all of us... and we need to be party-blind when it comes to educating our children.

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The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation has partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to fund a national public awareness campaign called Strong American Schools -- "ED in '08" – to galvanize the American public into action about the education crisis and to challenge the presidential candidates to make education a top priority.



Eli Broad is the founder-chairman of two Fortune 500 companies, SunAmerica Inc. and KB Home (formerly Kaufman and Broad Home Corporation). He is now a full-time philanthropist as founder of The Broad Foundations, which he and his wife established to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science and the arts. The Broad Foundations, which include The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and The Broad Art Foundation, have assets of \$2.5 billion.

The primary work of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation is to dramatically improve urban K-12 public education through better governance, management, labor relations and competition. The Broad Foundation's major education initiatives include the \$1 million Broad Prize for Urban Education, the largest education award in the country; The Broad Superintendents Academy, which has trained more school district superintendents than any university; The Broad Residency in Urban Education, which places recent business and law school graduates into managerial positions in the central operations of urban school districts; and The Broad Institute for School Boards, which trains newly appointed and elected school board members.

For more information, please visit www.broadfoundation.org. To schedule an interview with Eli Broad, please contact Karen Denne at 310-702-4280 or 310-954-5058, kdenne@broadfoundation.org

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