

- ① **Before reading the speech:** Research as much as you can about the setting of the speech. The following questions can guide you. (10 min)
 - What kind of school is Mapleton Expeditionary School?
 - Where is Mapleton Expeditionary School located?
 - How are the student demographics at Mapleton Expeditionary School?
 - What did Barack Obama's political career look like at that time?
- ② **Read** the speech, **divide** it into sections and **mark** the most relevant aspects and facts. (15 min)
- ③ **Write** a **summary** of the speech in about 150-200 words. (25 min)
- ④ **Hand your summary to a partner** and **proofread** their summary. (10 min)
 - Correct **language** mistakes (spelling, grammar, style).
 - Look at the **content** of the summary. Did they follow the proper structure (introduction - main part - conclusion)? Did they include the most important facts and aspects?
 - **Prepare a short feedback** that includes one aspect you really liked, one aspect that needs some improvement and one question you have about his summary.
- ⑤ **Hand back** your partner's summary and **exchange feedback**. Afterwards, take some time to **reflect** on your summary and **make some changes**, if necessary. (10 min)

Sen. Barack Obama's speech, "What's Possible for Our Children," delivered at Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts (MESA) in Thornton on May 28, 2008.

"It's an honor to be here at Mapleton Expeditionary School of the Arts. Just three years ago, only half of the high school seniors who walked the halls of this building were accepted to college. But today, thanks to the hard work of caring parents, innovative educators and some very committed students, all 44 seniors of this year's class have been

5 accepted to more than 70 colleges and universities across the country.

I'm here to congratulate you on this achievement, but also to hold up this school and these students as an example of what's possible in education if we're willing to break free from the tired thinking and political stalemate that's dominated Washington for decades, if we're willing to try new ideas and new reforms based not on ideology but on

10 what works to give our children the best possible chance in life.

At this defining moment in our history, they've never needed that chance more. In a world where good jobs can be located anywhere there's an Internet connection— where a child in Denver is competing with children in Beijing and Bangalore — the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge. Education is the currency of the Information Age,

15 no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success but a prerequisite. There simply aren't as many jobs today that can support a family where only a high school degree is required. And if you don't have that degree, there are even fewer jobs available that can keep you out of poverty.

In this kind of economy, countries who out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow. Already, China is graduating eight times as many engineers as we are. By 12th

20 grade, our children score lower on math and science tests than most other kids in the world. And we now have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation in the world. In fact, if the more than 16,000 Colorado students who dropped out of high school last year had only finished, the economy in this state would have seen

25 an additional \$4.1 billion in wages over these students' lifetimes.

There is still much progress to be made here in Thornton, but the work you've done shows us that we do not accept this future for America.

We don't have to accept an America where we do nothing about six million students who are reading below their grade level.

- 30 We don't have to accept an America where only 20 percent of our students are prepared to take college-level classes in English, math and science. Where barely one in 10 low-income students will ever graduate from college. [...]

This kind of America is morally unacceptable for our children. It's economically untenable for our future. And it's not who we are as a nation.

- 35 We are the nation that has always understood that our future is inextricably linked to the education of our children — all of them. We are the country that has always believed in Thomas Jefferson's declaration that "talent and virtue, needed in a free society, should be educated regardless of wealth or birth."

- 40 That's who we are. And that's why I believe it's time to lead a new era of mutual responsibility in education, one where we all come together for the sake of our children's success. An era where each of us does our part to make that success a reality: parents and teachers, leaders in Washington and citizens all across America. [...]

- 45 As president, I will work with our nation's governors and educators to create and use assessments that can improve achievement all across America by including the kinds of research, scientific investigation and problem-solving that our children will need to compete in a 21st century knowledge economy. [...]

- 50 A truly historic commitment to education — a real commitment — will require new resources and new reforms. It will require a willingness to move beyond the stale debates that have paralyzed Washington for decades: Democrat versus Republican; vouchers versus the status quo; more money versus more accountability. It will require leaders in Washington who are willing to learn a lesson from students and teachers in Thornton or Denver about what actually works. That's the kind of president I intend to be, and that's the kind of education plan I've proposed in this campaign. [...]

- 55 Finally, as so many of you know, there are too many children in America right now who are slipping away from us as we speak, who will not be accepted to college and won't even graduate high school. They are overwhelmingly black, and Latino, and poor. And when they look around and see that no one has lifted a finger to fix their school since the 19th century, when they are pushed out the door at the sound of the last bell — some into a virtual war zone — is it any wonder they don't think their education is important? Is it any wonder that they are dropping out in rates we've never seen before?

- 60 I know these children. I know their sense of hopelessness. I began my career over two decades ago as a community organizer on the streets of Chicago's South Side. And I worked with parents and teachers and local leaders to fight for their future. We set up after-school programs, and we even protested outside government offices so that we could get those who had dropped out into alternative schools. And in time, we changed futures. [...]

This is the commitment we must make to our children. This is the chance they must have. [...]

- 70 That is the promise of education in America, that no matter what we look like or where we come from or who our parents are, each of us should have the opportunity to fulfill our God-given potential. Each of us should have the chance to achieve the American dream. Here at MESA, you've shown America just how that's possible. I congratulate you, and I wish you continued success, and I look forward to working with you and learning from you in the months and years ahead. Thank you."