

Parents Matter

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Promoting Global Diversity at Home

This week we're reflecting on global diversity and how we as parents and educators can prepare students for the 21st century where diversity and intercultural exchange will, for most of us, be the norm.

Just ten or fifteen years ago, I had only a few friends who followed professional paths that led them across the globe. But today, it's a different picture. My niece, in her early twenties, works as a production assistant for a film company where most of her production teammates work and reside in India. My husband runs a furniture company based in Malaysia, and travels to Asia six or more times a year. This winter my neighbour's son decided to postpone his third year at University to move to China and learn the language and culture before he graduates, speculating that this global experience will set him apart as he begins his post-university job hunt. Clearly, the global economy is changing how we work and live, and in-turn, how we need to prepare our children.

Many families aren't able to travel the globe, however there are easy, inexpensive ways to bring an international perspective to your children.

Consider hosting an international student at your home. Often, you can sign up to have an exchange student stay anywhere from two weeks to a year. Cook meals or visit restaurants that feature foreign food and use the meals as a spring board for learning more about other cultures. Rent foreign films to give your children a visual picture of the landscapes, cultural norms, and political ideologies of other countries.

On occasion, tune into a BBC or CNN newscast to help your children hear different perspectives. Download talks on your computer from TED: Ideas Worth Spreading (www.ted.com) and expose your children to international leaders from a variety of fields sharing poignant and often electrifying messages. And nothing can broaden horizons like literature. Expose your child to books such as *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *Before We Were Free*, and *Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa*, which clearly paint different worlds while simultaneously reminding us that at our core we mostly share common values of love and family despite the myriad of cultural differences.

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Another Parent Tip From...

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