

A Homeschool Parent's Guide to Increasing High School Students' Marketability

in Higher Education and the Workplace – Part 2

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WHEN the vast majority of entry-level workers have earned their high school diplomas and college degrees, it can be difficult to stand out and be recognized for valuable skills and abilities. The job market and college enrollment are competitive, which drives admissions officers and employers to look for more skills and experience in their candidates. Beyond college acceptance and the entry-level job market, the competition only intensifies as the stakes are raised and the caliber of peers' credentials increases.

For students who are focused on securing successful and fulfilling careers, becoming a professional achiever must start in high school. There are several courses of action that you can take to encourage your homeschooler to develop his or her skills prior to collegiate and career pursuits, increasing your student's marketability to decision-makers. The following opportunities can be combined in a variety of ways to supplement your student's achievements, reinforcing successful areas and filling in any gaps. You and your child can analyze your child's performance in three major areas of marketability: academic achievement, professional development, and community involvement. Simply choose enrichment opportunities that correspond to any weak areas in order to increase your student's overall marketability and get the results you both deserve. (Academic Achievement

was discussed in Part 1 of this article appearing in the March April issue of The Homeschool Handbook)

Professional Development

A solid sense of professional development can add an extra dimension to a star student. It can also give high school graduates an advantage if they are immediately entering the work force. Strong professional development is also indispensable to any student who plans to work while attending college, obtain an associate's degree, or join the work force without a degree. Some professional development opportunities also have the potential to be converted to college credit, while others help students to function better in specific courses of study.

Earning Professional Certificates and Licenses

There are many types of certification and licensure opportunities that are valuable both in academia and in the workplace. Studying for and passing these tests can provide your student with a professional certificate or license, as well as college credit in some cases. The following tests can give high school homeschoolers the opportunity to get ahead in the professional world.



- **Microsoft Office Specialist:** Students who obtain this certification will be well prepared to focus on their courses' content rather than trying to keep up with the technical demands of projects. The popular Microsoft Office suite is commonly used in academia and should be well understood by all students. The American Council on Education states that passing the test can also result in college credit at some institutions.
- **Microsoft Technology Associate:** This certification is useful for entry-level job applicants who want to be employed in a technology-related field such as computer science.
- **Adobe Certified Associate:** For any students who are interested in careers involving digital media or design, this certification can give them an advantage over the competition. It helps them demonstrate the ability to use digital media effectively in planning, design, and the construction and maintenance of effective communications. Students who have earned the Creative Suite 3 certification may be eligible for college credit.
- **ICC (Internet and Computing Core) Certification, or IC³:** This certification is recommended for students who are studying for a technical major or entering the workforce in a computer-related field. Certifications obtained using the 2003 or 2005 standards are eligible for college credit at many colleges. Many rely on this certification to help them choose the best candidates, using it to assess students' potential for academic or professional advancement. The results often play a significant role in determining an employee's advancement within a company.
- **CompTIA Strata Certification:** This certification demonstrates a student's knowledge of IT fundamentals and is a critical step toward advanced technical learning and skill development. It can be especially beneficial to students who want to enter the workforce in an IT department or related position.

All of these tests are described in more detail at www.certipoint.com, where you can find a location near you and schedule a testing date for your student.

Community Involvement

For the student who aims to be accepted at a top institution or land a career-launching job, community involvement should be added to solid academic achievement and professional development efforts. It adds an interpersonal dimension and a sense of social responsibility to a student's list of achievements. In academia and the workplace, it takes more than head knowledge to succeed, and community involvement can demonstrate that your student is fully equipped to function well in any environment.

Volunteering

Your student may not have a lot of time, but investing a few hours a week as a volunteer will prove to be well worth the effort when your student is being assessed by an admissions officer or potential employer. Donating time at your local soup kitchen or shelter is always effective, but if your student is unable to do this, there are other options. For example, if your student is a musician, he or she could perform at your local nursing home or at a children's hospital. Many students also choose to collect and donate food, participate in seasonal volunteering opportunities like the Christmas Angel program, or sell handmade items whose proceeds go to charitable organizations. Habitat for Humanity is another popular option, especially for students who prefer more physical labor. Participating in two or more volunteer efforts will demonstrate that your student is fully dedicated to improving his or her community with personal involvement. ▲



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