

PreK-6 Menu of Classroom Activities: President Obama's Address to Students Across America

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Before the Speech:

- Teachers can build background knowledge about the President of the United States and his speech by reading books about presidents and Barack Obama and motivate students by asking the following questions:
 - Who is the President of the United States?
 - What do you think it takes to be President?
 - To whom do you think the President is going to be speaking?
 - Why do you think he wants to speak to you?
 - What do you think he will say to you?
- Teachers can ask students to imagine being the President delivering a speech to all of the students in the United States. What would you tell students? What can students do to help in our schools? Teachers can chart ideas about what they would say.
- Why is it important that we listen to the President and other elected officials, like the mayor, senators, members of congress, or the governor? Why is what they say important?

During the Speech:

- As the President speaks, teachers can ask students to write down key ideas or phrases that are important or personally meaningful. Students could use a note-taking graphic organizer such as a Cluster Web, or students could record their thoughts on sticky notes. Younger children can draw pictures and write as appropriate. As students listen to the speech, they could think about the following:
 - What is the President trying to tell me?
 - What is the President asking me to do?
 - What new ideas and actions is the President challenging me to think about?
- Students can record important parts of the speech where the President is asking them to do something. Students might think about: What specific job is he asking me to do? Is he asking anything of anyone else? Teachers? Principals? Parents? The American people?
- Students can record any questions they have while he is speaking and then discuss them after the speech. Younger children may need to dictate their questions.

After the Speech:

- Teachers could ask students to share the ideas they recorded, exchange sticky notes or stick notes on a butcher paper poster in the classroom to discuss main ideas from the speech, i.e. citizenship, personal responsibility, civic duty.
- Students could discuss their responses to the following questions:
 - What do you think the President wants us to do?
 - Does the speech make you want to do anything?
 - Are we able to do what President Obama is asking of us?
 - What would you like to tell the President?

Extension of the Speech: Teachers can extend learning by having students

- Create posters of their goals. Posters could be formatted in quadrants or puzzle pieces or trails marked with the labels: personal, academic, community, country. Each area could be labeled with three steps for achieving goals in those areas. It might make sense to focus on personal and academic so community and country goals come more readily.
- Write letters to themselves about how they can achieve their short-term and long-term education goals. These would be collected and redistributed at an appropriate later date by the teacher to make students accountable to their goals.
- Write goals on colored index cards or precut designs to post around the classroom.
- Interview and share about their goals with one another to create a supportive community.
- Participate in School wide incentive programs or contests for students who achieve their goals.
- Write about their goals in a variety of genres, i.e. poems, songs, personal essays.
- Create artistic projects based on the themes of their goals.
- Graph student progress toward goals.