

JOIN FANS OF *the Atlantic* ON FACEBOOK

MAGAZINE

CHANNELS

VOICES

CORRESPONDENTS

DISPATCHES

VIDEO

SUBSCRIBE

BusinessPoliticsFood

TRACKING OPINIONS
AS THEY BREAK



Sep 8 2009, 9:10am by Max Fisher

Obama's Appeal to Students Wins Some Kudos on Right

Some conservatives defend it as good or just banal, but others say the medium is the message

Obama's plan to give a speech to school children [drew conservative outrage](#) last week over fears that the speech would serve as "indoctrination" of "junior lobbyists" to help push Obama's political agenda. But, over the weekend the White House released the text of the speech and some key conservatives have given it the thumbs up. It turns out the speech isn't indoctrination, and in fact is not even very political.

The concern trolling by [Michelle Malkin](#), [Cato](#), [RedState](#) and [others](#), who speculated the worst of Obama's speech, turns out to have been largely bogus. And those, like Newt Gingrich, who withheld judgment until the release of the speech have come out looking pretty good. But some suspicions do remain among a handful of conservatives.

- A Good Speech** New Gingrich, after reading the speech, [wrote](#), "It is a good speech and will be good for students to hear." National Review's Jim Geraghty agreed. "Not only uncontroversial, Obama's school speech is the finest of his presidency so far," [Geraghty wrote](#). "Kids need to hear there's no easy route to success." [Ed Morrissey called](#) the speech "entirely innocuous" and a "non-event" due to its banal material. "It focuses on achievement and perseverance, two less-than-controversial qualities of success," he wrote. "It avoids any hint of proselytizing." Morrissey even questioned the far-more political speech Reagan gave to students in 1986.
- The Medium is the Message** Reason's [Jesse Walker argued](#) that the text of the speech is irrelevant. "The exercise itself has ideological undertones, with an implicit lesson that reinforces the bipartisan cult of the presidency," he wrote. "The man in the Oval Office is not supposed to be the nation's chief guidance counselor or its father-in-chief, and it sends a creepy message to act as though he is." Walker argued that "politics is about conflict" and that children are well served by controversy over the speech. "The protests are healthy. It's a rare day when parents across the country explicitly tell their kids to take their lessons with a grain of salt."
- There is No 'I' in Country** Ed Morrissey, though generally approving of the speech, [expressed concern](#) over the number of times Obama referred to himself far more than anything else (56 instances of "I" and only 7 of "country," for example). "Barack Obama referenced himself more than school, education, responsibility, country/nation, parents, and teachers *combined*," he wrote. "And to think that people accused Obama of self-promotion!" Morrissey [returned](#) to these [numbers](#) several [times](#) on [Twitter](#).

SEARCH

GO

THE ATLANTIC
BUSINESS

ABOUT



Welcome to The Atlantic Wire, a new addition to our digital family that tracks the biggest debates as they happen. From the op-ed pages and the blogosphere to television, radio, and magazines, we follow hundreds of writers who are the leading producers of opinion and commentary. We find the best analysis and the most daring arguments, revealing who's up, who's down, and who won the day. This summer, we preview a portion of the full site, which launches in September.

Most Recent Posts

- [Tennis Upstart Draws Raves](#)
- [How Powerful Is Glenn Beck?](#)
- [Liberals Bring Heat on Health Care](#)
- [One Reason to Stay in Afghanistan: September 11](#)

The Debate

- [Obama's School Speech is Good](#) *Newt Gingrich*, Twitter
- [School Speech Best of Obama's Career](#) *Jim Geraghty*, Twitter
- [The President is not a Guidance Counselor](#) *Jesse Walker*, Reason
- [The Words of Obama's School Speech](#) *Ed Morrissey*, Hot Air

EDITOR'S NOTE Truth and Reconciliation

It's time for Bush to "restore honor"

TECHNOLOGY The Case for Green Cities

If you want to save energy, leave the suburbs

FOOD Sugar and Spice

Reinventing old-fashioned candy, naturally

DIY Business The Top 100 Away from the Intertubes
Created by [Chris Anderson](#) 8:10:22 AM P.M. 9.1.09 8:32 A.M.

Obama's make or break speech
9.8.09 1:29 P.M.

Name

Address 1

Address 2

City

State Zip

Email

SUBMIT

[HOME](#) | [ATLANTIC FAQ](#) | [MASTHEAD](#) | [SITE GUIDE](#) | [SUBSCRIBE](#) | [SUBSCRIBER HELP](#)

[ATLANTIC STORE](#) | [EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM](#) | [JOBS/INTERNSHIPS](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#) | [FEEDBACK](#) | [ADVERTISE](#)

Copyright © 2009 by The Atlantic Monthly Group. All rights reserved.