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Paying lip service to education

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"We need to stop paying lip service to public education, and start holding communities, administrators, teachers, parents and students accountable." - barackobama.com

Empty words from the leader of the party that would [rather pay back political patrons](#) than give students a chance to escape the [worst performing school system in the country](#). The astoundingly bad performance of DC schools is not for a lack of funding. The CATO institute's [Andrew J. Coulson](#) dug through the Washington DC budgets [adding up all](#) of the education spending and found that that Washington DC spends a jaw dropping [\\$28,170 per pupil](#) (second highest of any large school system nation wide!). Yet even after spending that much money on it's students only 14 percent of fourth graders could read at grade level. Overall Washington DC students have [the worst](#) National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores in the nation by a wide margin.

There was hope for some low-income residents of DC in the form scholarships that allowed students to escape their failing public education system and attend private schools. The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) paid up to \$7,500 dollars to students that [met certain criteria](#). The average scholarship awarded was about \$6,600. Congress [mandated](#) that the program be independently evaluated to ensure that the program was effective. The results are [startling](#). Students were reading better, and more importantly the achievement gap between minority students and whites was being closed by OSP recipients. Costing less than a quarter per student compared to the district's per pupil spending, while getting better results, **ESPECIALLY** for minority students, seemed like an impossible combination but the DC OSP program did just that. It was rewarded for it's success by being [defunded](#) by President Obama and the Democratically controlled Congress.

Last year President Obama gave a national speech on the importance of education. In the run up to that speech the President was [interviewed by eleven year old Damon Weaver](#). In that Interview the President talked about money and increased funding for education. One of the most pertinent quotes from young Mr. Weavers interview was the Presidents response to Damon's question on how education can be improved.

President Obama said

"We've also got to improve how the schools are operating, and we have really been trying to focus on how do you find the best schools and figure out what it is that they're doing well. And they're trying to get other schools that aren't doing so well to do the same kinds of things that the schools who are doing well are doing. So I hope that we can really see some improvement, not just with money, but also with reforming how the schools work."

We know now what these words really mean - [nothing](#).

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