



## Chambersburg Area School District lets teachers decide if they'll show Obama's address to students

By KEITH PARADISE Staff writer

A speech to students by President Barack Obama is causing a stir locally and nationally.

President Obama is scheduled to address the nation's school children in a 15- to 20-minute speech at noon Tuesday. According to an invitation sent to schools at the end of last month, the topic of Obama's speech will be working hard in the classroom, setting educational goals and taking responsibility for their learning. He will also call for a shared responsibility and commitment between students, educators and parents to ensure every child receives a quality education.

Some people across the country don't expect that to be the message. The chairman of the Republican Party of Florida, Jim Greer, blasted the speech, calling it an "indoctrination" that would force students to watch a speech on Obama's political policies. Critics take issue with the study guides offered to teachers to use as part of teaching around the speech, including lesson plans and the president's call for "a supportive community."

"It essentially tries to force kids to say the president and the presidency is inspiring, and that's very problematic," Neal McCluskey, associate director of Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom "It's very concerning that you would do that," he said in an interview published by FoxNews.com.

In response, the White House announced Thursday that the full text of Obama's speech will be made available on Monday, a full day before it is to be delivered, in order to allow educators to determine if they want to air the speech.

Chambersburg Area School District spokeswoman Sylvia Rockwood said the district has received about 15 phone calls from concerned parents who didn't think the speech should be shown district-wide because it could be considered a political statement. Instead, the district is making the speech optional to teachers who want to use it as part of a curriculum, such as social studies.

"We're not planning on doing a mass-viewing of the speech," she said.

Greencastle-Antrim School District has posted on its Web site the invitation from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and has also written a response to the invitation. The response said that the district is encouraging faculty to participate and said it is common for teachers to tune in to national or international events on television in the classroom that are considered historic. The response also states that the

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responsibility would fall on the student's family to engage them in discussion about the speech as it relates to a personal or family stance.

"I think it is a historic event. It's the president of the United States telling kids to work hard in school. We're going to watch it. I'm hoping that it's a non-political speech. It would be nice if education was not political," Greencastle-Antrim Superintendent Greg Hoover said on Thursday.

Tuscarora School District Superintendent Rebecca Erb said that the district offices have received about a half-dozen phone calls from concerned parents about the speech. She said it will not be broadcast building-wide or district-wide so that it doesn't interfere with instruction time, but will be available to teachers who wish to air it. She said if a student comes to school with a note from a parent saying they don't want their child to view the speech, that student would be dismissed for the duration of the speech.

"If the parents object, we will honor that in some way," Erb said.

In Franklin County, in the 2008 presidential election, Democrat Obama received 33 percent of the vote; Republican Sen. John McCain had 66 percent. In the previous presidential election, George W. Bush, a Republican, had 72 percent of the vote in Franklin County.

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