

[Click to Print](#)[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Local

[\[Print\]](#) [\[Email\]](#)

Loudoun schools opt out of Obama speech

By: [Leah Fabel](#)

Examiner Staff Writer

September 4, 2009

Loudoun County school officials will not show their students President Obama's back-to-school speech on Tuesday amid a swirl of controversy about the appropriateness of the moment.

"There will be no forced showings," said Loudoun spokesman Wayne Byard. "It's not a philosophical thing, it's just logistical."

Byard said that schools "want instruction to start on the first day," and said that the speech would be available online for teachers who wished to use it as part of a lesson plan.



(ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Obama will be appearing at Arlington County's Wakefield High School to "speak directly to the nation's children and youth about persisting and succeeding in school," according to an online letter from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Attached to the letter are lesson plans for incorporating the speech into the school day, including goal-setting exercises and guided discussions. Suggested questions include: "What do you believe are the challenges of your generation? How can you be a part of addressing these challenges?"

Furor over the event began soon afterward, when some conservatives blasted it as an attempt to indoctrinate young minds.

"It's one thing for a president to encourage all kids to work hard and stay in school," said the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey. "It's another thing entirely, however, to have the U.S. Department of Education -- a taxpayer-funded entity -- send detailed instructions to schools nationwide on how to glorify the president and the presidency, and push them to drive social change."

McCluskey condemned Duncan's assertion that educators are "critical to ... our social progress" as a suggestion that the administration aims to impose its values on students. He found "most distressing of all" the guidance for students to read books "about presidents and Barack Obama."

Other school systems in the region are allowing individual principals to decide if they want to offer a formal

showing, such as gathering students in an auditorium.


In Montgomery County, a teacher can use the speech in his or her lesson plan "if it's been OK'ed by the principal," said spokesman Chris Cram.

In Virginia, the state's department of education is encouraging schools "to make reasonable accommodations for students whose parents may object to the viewing of the speech by their children during the school day," according to spokesman Charles Pyle.

lfabel@washingtonexaminer.com

Find this article at:

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/local/Loudoun-schools-opt-out-of-Obama-speech-8194630-57051007.html>

 **Click to Print**

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.