

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Students at Parkville Middle School and Center of Technology in Baltimore, Maryland
February 14, 2011

The President. Hello, hello—there we go. Parkville Middle School, can you hear me now?

Students. Yes!

The President. Well, it is wonderful to see all of you. And I want to thank your terrific principal, all the great staff who helped to arrange this visit.

First of all, Malia and Sasha say hi.

Students. Hi!

The President. Michelle says hi.

Students. Hi!

The President. Happy Valentine's Day. Have you guys been exchanging valentines?

Students. Yes——

The President. Yeah? A little bit, huh?

In addition to coming here to wish you happy Valentine's Day, the other reason I'm here is because what you guys are doing here at Parker—at Parkville—the principal is Parker—what we're—what you guys are doing here at Parkville is so important to our future.

We live in a world that is getting smaller because of technology. You saw recently what was happening in Egypt. People with Facebook and Twitter led an entire revolution in their country. And we were watching it live on television. Twenty years ago, 30 years ago, that would have been impossible.

So the world is getting smaller, and what it means is, is that there are terrific opportunities for us to partner with people around the world, but it also means that the world is more competitive, because when you graduate from high school and when you graduate from college, you're going to be competing with people all around the world to make the best products and the best services. And so for us to be successful as a country, you're going to have to succeed. And for you to succeed, you're going to have to be able to possess the skills and knowledge of a 21st-century economy.

And that means math and that means science. And so we wanted to come here to highlight the great work that you guys are doing in math and science and engineering, because we want the kind of success that we're seeing at this school spread all across the country. And that requires we make investments in great teachers and good equipment and labs and the Internet. And it means that we've got to make sure that we're emphasizing every day how important education is and we're putting our money behind it.

So right now I'm in the process of putting together a big Federal budget. And some of you may know that we've got a big deficit because we just came out of a big recession, and so people are worried about how we're going to be able to pay for things in the future. And the message that I delivered today was, just like in your own households, if things get a little tight,

you may stop going out to dinner or stop going to the movies, but you're still going to make sure that you're paying for the things that are really important like heat or fixing the roof or your parents are setting money aside for your college education. We've got to do that same thing as a country.

And so I wanted to make sure that we came to your school today to highlight it and also applaud you for your success. So I'm just hoping that everybody here knows we're proud of you; that you guys are working hard; that you stay focused because your success ultimately is going to mean America's success.

All right? Now, I think I'll take time—I'm not supposed to do this, but I think I'll take time for like two questions. So anybody have any questions? All right, this young man right here. He had his hand up right away.

Life as President

Q. What does it feel like to be President?

The President. What does it feel like to be the President? You know, some days you're burdened by some really tough decisions. Some of you may have family members who are in Afghanistan, for example. And I'm the Commander in Chief, and so I'm responsible for sending those young men and women over, who are doing an amazing job. Some of them get hurt; some of them get killed. And so you feel a responsibility that is profound about making that decision. Even though you think it's the best thing to do for the country, it's one that carries an unbelievable cost.

There are days where you feel really excited because something that you got done you know is helping somebody. So when we passed the health care bill that we passed—and it was controversial. It was a lot of work. It was—and some people still don't like it. But I would get letters from people who said, "My kid couldn't get insurance before, and now I feel secure because they're able to get health insurance so that when they get sick they're able to get health care." So that makes you feel good.

Every day I feel proud and privileged to have the chance to work in this office. But I'll be honest with you. There are certain parts of the job that are kind of tough, like I'm kind of in this bubble. I can't go anywhere, I can't just—if I want to just go to the corner drugstore and buy some shaving cream or something—[*laughter*]—or if I just feel like taking a walk with Bo—like I can't do anything spontaneous, and that kind of gets on your nerves.

And the other thing is people know who you are everywhere, obviously. [*Laughter*] So you have to—you always have to, like, shave and comb your hair and—[*laughter*]—you can't just roll out of bed and be out there. [*Laughter*] So that kind of stuff can be a little tough.

Young lady right here.

Managing Stress/President's Advice for Future Success

Q. Is there a lot of stress in——

The President. Stand up, I'm sorry. What's your name?

Q. Brianna.

The President. Brianna. So what were you saying?

Q. Is there like a lot of stress when you——

The President. Like when I'm working on the economy or something?

Q. —when you're working on the economy—

The President. Well, yeah, look, there's stress involved. But let me tell you something. I promise you there's stress involved being the principal of a middle school. There's stress involved being a teacher.

One of the things that I want everybody here to understand is, is that whatever profession you choose, whether it's being President, being an engineer, being the principal of a school, being a teacher, there are going to be some stresses involved. There aren't that many jobs out there that you just kind of sit back and have fun all the time. But that's part of growing up, and that's part of being successful, is managing that stress.

The one thing that I think helps me handle the stress is if I feel like, at the end of the day, I've done the best possible job I can do, even if not everything has worked out exactly the way I planned it, then I feel okay. What bothers me is if I feel like, gosh, I could have done better on that.

So you guys should take the same attitude with respect to school. I mean, look, I know seventh and eighth graders, you guys have got your own little stresses. And growing up is stressful, and taking tests are stressful, and getting that paper in on time is stressful. The key is just making sure that you're hungry for knowledge, you're working hard, you're getting better all the time. If you do that, then you can look yourself in the mirror and say, I'm doing my best.

And if everybody here is doing their best, I'm confident you guys are going to succeed and thrive.

All right? Well, I'm very proud of you guys. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:38 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Murray G. "Buddy" Parker III, principal, Parkville Middle School and Center of Technology.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Parkville Middle School and Center of Technology, remarks and question-and-answer session in Baltimore, MD.

Locations: Baltimore, MD.

Names: Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Parker, Murray G. "Buddy," III.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Afghanistan: U.S. military forces :: Casualties; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Fiscal year 2012; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Science and math programs; Education : Teachers; Education : Technology and innovation, expansion efforts; Egypt : Democracy efforts; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Maryland : Parkville Middle School and Center of Technology in Baltimore; Maryland : President's visits.

DCPD Number: DCPD201100086.