

[Back](#) | 
 [Home](#) | 
 Share: [ShareThis](#) | 
 [Print](#) | 
 [Comment](#)

## Local students tune in as President says education ticket to success



**Robert Kanavel**  
 Black River Public School students Matt Palmateer and Mitchell Kiss take detailed notes during President Obama's live address Tuesday.

**More related photos**



ADVERTISEMENT

**By STEPHEN KLOOSTERMAN**  
**The Holland Sentinel**  
 Posted Sep 08, 2009 @ 11:25 PM  
 Last update Sep 09, 2009 @ 06:12 AM

Holland, MI — President Barack Obama was one of the first faces many students saw on the first day of school. A presidential pep talk to the nation's schoolchildren on Tuesday was televised in many local classrooms, while some, like Zeeland, offered students an opt-out if parents objected.

"I think he was really demanding," said Evan Wright, a high school sophomore at Black River Public School. "He was like, if you fail, you fail your country. It was kind of like, whoa!"

Addressing students grades K-12, Obama emphasized the importance of responsibility, telling students that if they quit school, "You're not just quitting on yourself, you're quitting on your country."

The president spoke about his own experiences as the child of a single parent, being more interested in basketball than academics, and coming to the realization that a great education was essential to success.

"And no matter what you want to do with your life, I guarantee that you'll need an education to do it. You want to be a doctor, or a teacher, or a police officer? You want to be a nurse or an architect, a lawyer or a member of our military? You're going to need a good education for every single one of those careers. You cannot drop out of school and just drop into a good job. You've got to train for it and work for it and learn for it," Obama exhorted. "And this isn't

just important for your own life and your own future. What you make of your education will decide nothing less than the future of this country."

"It was a great speech," said Ryer Appeldoorn, a Black River sophomore. "I thought it was nice how he brought in aspects from his younger life."

Judicious, nonpartisan viewing was encouraged.

"It's not as important that we agree with everything that he says," Black River English teacher Nicole Sinclair told her students before the speech started.

Intent students took notes and shared observations after the speech.

- Bank invests in financial fitness curriculum for schools (09/09/09)
- Jobs, programs are proposed Ottawa County cuts for 2010 budget (09/09/09)
- Economist: Local businesses in good position for recovery (09/08/09)
- Tough flu season forecast (09/08/09)
- Sentinel welcomes new reporter to staff (09/08/09)
- Woman admits taking \$350,000 from firm (09/08/09)
- Local students tune in as President says education ticket to success (09/08/09)
- Granholm outlines plans for balancing state budget (09/08/09)
- Iodine pills made available (09/08/09)
- No new fountain for Zeeland square (09/08/09)

**[+] EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT** The ideal candidate will be experienced

**[+] Northside home near Ottawa Beach. 3 Bedrooms, 1.5 baths 2**

**[+] Office Assistant Must have Marketing & Customer Service**

**[+] Building Maintenance Exp. in mechanical, electrical &**

**[+] PRINTING- Bindery machine operators for 2nd and 3rd shifts**

**[+] Call us today! Roofing Siding WINDOWS KITCHENS**



**[+] Computer Repair Fast, Friendly, & Reliable Savings: average**

**[+] RON ESSENBERG PAINTING Professional Exterior & Interior**

**[+] Tractor Air, LLC Well Make You Cool Specializing in A/C and**

**[+] Gregs Tree Service Tree removal/ trimming Stump grinding Lot**

**[+] Call us today! Roofing Siding WINDOWS KITCHENS**

**[+] Bunt's Pharmacy 115 E Main Zeeland MI 49464**

[View all ads](#)

"It was cool, because the things he's said, have been said many times, but we're more likely to (take notice) because he's the president," said Leah French, a Black River freshman.

The move to directly address students received criticism from Republicans late last week, with some conservative groups alleging that it was an attempt by the President to push his agenda on domestic issues. The president did discuss the importance of universal healthcare during a question and answer session with students Wakefield High School in Arlington, Va.

"I can say a lot of the people I had talked to had said they didn't want their kids to hear it at school," said Ottawa County Republicans Executive Director Faith Steketee. "I think most of them just want to have more information."

Hope College political science Professor Jack Holmes — a member of the Ottawa County Republicans — said that he thought the protests were one reason a transcript of the speech text was released on Monday, Sept. 7.

Former President George Herbert Walker Bush addressed students in 1991, also drawing criticism — from Democrats.

---

[+] **Wonderful home, terrific price! Come take a look! 6445**

---

[+] **Quiet Neighborhood & Great Price! 108 OAK VALLEY**

---

[+] **Beautiful Home in Timberline Acres 2943 Foxboro Lane**

---

[+] **Call for your private showing! 205 Jennifer Lane This home**

---

[+] **Large Wooded Corner Lot Spacious Northside Home! 14221**

---

[+] **PRICE REDUCED!! 125 Beth St.- Holland This home is nestled**

[View all ads](#) ➔

---

[+] **2002 Dodge Stratus SXT \$5,980  
www.FoxMotors.com 13001 New**

---

[+] **2002 Ford Mustang 6cyl, auto, one**

---

[+] **2002 Mercury Sable LS \$4,788 www.FoxMotors.com 13001 New**

---