

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:10 p.m. on March 11 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on

March 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 12.

Remarks to an Overflow Crowd at Kenmore Middle School in Arlington,
Virginia
March 14, 2011

The President. Hey! Hey, Kenmore! How are you? Good to see you guys. Hello, everybody. Hello, everybody. How are you? All right, everybody, have a seat. Everybody, have a seat.

Well, I was just wandering out and I—suddenly all of you were here. Well, it is wonderful to see you guys. First of all, I want to introduce—this is Arne Duncan, who’s the Secretary of Education and a good friend of mine. Give him a big round of applause.

How’s everybody doing today?

Audience members. Good!

The President. Good. Well, I wanted to come by partly because we’ve designated this Education Month at the White House. And what we are doing is traveling all across the country, finding schools that are doing a great job, and highlighting how we can make sure that every school is doing a great job.

So I want to congratulate your principal, I want to congratulate your teachers, and most of all, I want to congratulate the students for doing some outstanding work here at Kenmore. You guys have made us proud. When we look at the improvement that you’re making, day in, day out, what that tells me is, is that you’ve got a lot of hard-working young people who are really focused on learning.

And there’s never been a time where that’s more important. Part of what I’m going to do when I speak to the other group is to explain that it used to be, if you were willing to work hard, you didn’t really need an education to get a good job. You could go to a factory, and you could build things, you could make things. But you didn’t necessarily have to know math. You didn’t necessarily have to be able to communicate that effectively.

These days, if you want to get a good job, have a great career, the only way you’re going to do it is if you have a good education. And so that starts early. It can’t—you can’t wait until you get to be old like me—[laughter]—to get an education. You got to start young. And that’s what you guys are doing each and every day.

So the main message I have for you is that we’re proud of you, but we need you all to buckle down and keep working hard. This is right about the age when I—what grades are you guys? Seventh, eighth?

Audience members. Eighth grade.

The President. This is eighth grade. I’ve got a confession to make. This is probably right around the time I was at my worst. I mean, I was getting in trouble all the time. I was in the principal’s office all the time. I was—and so boys especially—[laughter]—this is the age where you start getting a little distracted. And so I just hope that everybody really stays focused. Yes, have fun, but listen to your teachers, listen to your parents, and make sure that you really are doing everything you can to succeed in school.

And I know that—I know you will, and as a consequence, I know that you guys are going to be able to do anything that you ever want to do, including maybe being the Secretary of Education or the President of the United States.

All right. Thank you, guys. See you later. See you. And teachers, good job! We’re proud of you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:04 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to John A. Word, principal, Kenmore Middle School.