



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on September 4, 2009

White House Propagandizes Students

The U.S. Department of Education has backed off naked propaganda on behalf of President Obama in published lesson plans, only to cover over that propaganda with the equivalent of a bikini thong. Obama's Department of Education had prepared two "lesson plans" for public school teachers in advance of the president's September 8 address to public school students.



ABC News' Jake Tapper reported, "As one of the preparatory materials for teachers provided by the Department of Education, students had been asked to, 'Write letters to themselves about what they can do to help the president.'" The "lesson plan," if it can be called that, amounted to nothing more than hero worship of the president and an amateurish attempt to mobilize political support for the president among those attending the government schools.

Faced with public exposure of its agenda, the White House quickly had the lesson plans re-written and republished online (the revised lessons are [here](#) and [here](#)). "We changed it to clarify the language so the intent is clear," White House Spokesman Tommy Vietor told ABC's Tapper.

The new lesson plans replace the "help the president" line with: "Write letters to themselves about how they can achieve their short-term and long-term education goals."

That's definitely an improvement over the naked propaganda. But the the "intent" is still "clear" among the new lesson plans. Those new lesson plans ask rather uncritical questions such as: "Is President Obama inspiring you to do anything? Is he challenging you to do anything? What do you believe are the challenges of your generation? How can you be a part of addressing these challenges?" In other words, they're not substantially different from the original questions.

A lesson plan genuinely geared toward increasing a student's critical thinking skills would include questions that are, well, critical. They would include uncomfortable questions for the administration, so they were omitted. Questions teachers might ask include:

- What is President Obama's expertise in giving students advice?
- Recent presidents have often made addresses to students. What political advantage is that to incumbent presidents?
- Does President Obama's position as president of the United States give him any authority to give students directions? Does it give him any authority to give parents directions?
- If so, where in the U.S. Constitution can it be found?
- If not, to what extent should his words have weight with you?



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Without questions such as these, the government lesson plan is at best a waste of time for those students who are not at risk of dropping out of school.

The speech and initial lesson plans caused an uproar among Republicans, and in Florida that resulted in [a sternly worded press release](#) from the GOP state chairman Jim Greer. “As the father of four children, I am absolutely appalled that taxpayer dollars are being used to spread President Obama’s socialist ideology. The idea that school children across our nation will be forced to watch the President justify his plans for government-run health care, banks, and automobile companies, increasing taxes on those who create jobs, and racking up more debt than any other President, is not only infuriating, but goes against beliefs of the majority of Americans, while bypassing American parents through an invasive abuse of power.”

The president hasn’t given his address to students yet, and from the advance description given by the Department of Education, the focus seems to be on inspiring kids not to drop out of school rather than healthcare and other issues. “The president will challenge students to work hard, set educational goals, and take responsibility for their learning,” the Department of Education’s website [says](#). Greer’s objections may be a technically off the mark, but the clear direction behind the questions means he was substantively correct.

Of course, if Obama were truly interested in decreasing the dropout rates, he’d be urging an exodus from public schools to private education. Catholic and other private schools have far lower dropout rates, even after income and family status and other social phenomena are accounted for (see a few of the many studies [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). And Catholic and other private schools enjoy better results even though they typically have [lower per-pupil expenditures](#). But Obama won’t promote private schooling and its results of lower dropout rates, because it would decrease the power of Washington and conflict with his [educational campaign promises](#).

The Department of Education lesson plans are instructive. They reveal that the federal government’s primary role in education is to promote a bigger role for the federal government in education. “The intent is clear,” as the White House spokesman told ABC news, despite the fact that the intent is the opposite of what the White House says it is.

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