

President Trump Has His First Parent-Teacher Conference

On Tuesday, President Donald Trump held a parent-teacher conference with Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos at the White House.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Trump made a brief statement for the press pool on hand:

As I said many times in my campaign, we want every child in America to have the opportunity to climb the ladder to success. I want every child also to have a safe community, and we're going to do that very much. We're going to be helping you a lot—a great school and some day to get a really well-paying job or better, or better, own their own company. And a lot of people are looking at that.

But it all begins with education, and that's why we're here this morning. And I'm here also to celebrate a little bit with Betsy because we started this journey a long time ago, having to do with change and so many other good things with education. And I'm so happy that that all worked out.

Right now, too many of our children don't have the opportunity to get that education that we all talk about. Millions of poor, disadvantaged students are trapped in failing schools and this crisis—and it really is a crisis—of education and communities working together but not working out. And we're going to change it around, especially for the African-American communities. It's been very, very tough and unfair. And I know that's a priority and it's a certainly a priority of mine.

That's why I want every single disadvantaged child in America, no matter what their background or where they live, to have a choice about where they go to school. And it's

worked out so well in some communities where it's been properly run and properly done. And it's a terrific thing.

Charter schools, in particular, have demonstrated amazing gains and results. And you look at the results—we have cases in New York City that have been amazing in providing education to disadvantaged children and the success of so many different schools that I can name throughout the country that I got to see during the campaign. I went to one in Las Vegas; it was the most unbelievable thing you've ever seen. And they've done a fantastic job.

So there are many such schools and we want to do that on a large-scale basis. We can never lose sight of the connection between education and jobs. I'm bringing a lot of jobs back. We're bringing a lot of big plants back into the country—everyone said it was impossible. And before I even took office, we started the process and tremendous numbers of plants are coming back into this country—car plants and other plants. And I have meetings next week with four or five different companies, big ones that are going to bring massive numbers of jobs back.

So we're doing it from the jobs standpoint, but education only makes it better. Our goal is a clear and very safe community, great schools, and we want those jobs that are high-paying jobs—we've lost a lot of our best jobs to other countries and we're going to bring them back.

The listening session was attended by parents and educators from a wide array of educational environments. Although the details of the listening session weren't made public, the following teachers and parents were on hand:

- Ken Smith, a teacher who works with at-risk youth;
- Laura Parish, a homeschool mother from Virginia;
- Mary Riner, whose children attend a Washington, D.C., charter school;

- Jennifer Coleman, a former private school teacher who now homeschools her six children;
- Bartholomew Cirenza, a parent whose children have attended both public and private schools;
- Julie Baumann, a public school special education teacher from New Jersey;
- Jane Quennville, principal of a special education center in Virginia specializing in those with autism and “physical and medically fragile conditions”;
- Carol Bonilla, who teaches Spanish to grades 4-8 at a private school in Virginia; and
- Aimee Viana, a former public and private school teacher who now homeschools her two children.

DeVos also made a statement before the listening session began:

“I am just very honored to have the opportunity to serve America’s students, and I’m really excited to be here today with parents and educators representing traditional public schools, charter public schools, home-schools, private schools, a range of choices. And we’re eager to listen and learn from you your ideas for how we can ensure that all of our kids have an equal opportunity for a high-quality, great education and therefore an opportunity for the future.” {eo}