



STAFF PHOTOS: KATHY JOHNSON

Seventh-grader Jaron Green joins other Hubbard Middle School students in Plainfield on Tuesday as they watch a webcast of President Barack Obama's address to the nation's students.

# Kids get the message

## Speech inspires students to set goals, official says

By **MARK SPIVEY**  
STAFF WRITER

**PLAINFIELD** — Shiasiah Copeland expertly summarized President Barack Obama's approximately 20-minute address Tuesday to students nationwide with two short sentences.

"This is serious," Shiasiah said, paraphrasing the afternoon address that took place at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Va., and was broadcast live on C-SPAN and on the White House's Web site. "If you don't have an education, you're going to have nothing in life."

Shiasiah, an eighth-grader at Hubbard Middle School, was one of nearly

7,000 city students to tune in Tuesday, as Plainfield Public Schools showed the address in all of its 15 schools.

Encouraging students nationwide to "put in the hard work it takes to succeed," Obama used firm language and a serious tone to convey his message — that school isn't just somewhere to be, but a bridge to a better future.

"The future of America depends on you," Obama told students. "If you quit on school, you're not only quitting on yourself, you're quitting on your country."



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## FROM PAGE ONE



STAFF PHOTO: KATHY JOHNSON

Hubbard Middle School students applaud as President Barack Obama is introduced during his televised address Tuesday.

## Obama

FROM PAGE A1

The controversy that made national headlines during the days leading up to the address was nowhere to be found Tuesday in Plainfield, which voted 93 percent in favor of Obama in the 2008 presidential election. Some conservatives in other parts of the country called for parents and schools to boycott the address, claiming Obama was using the opportunity to promote a political agenda.

Conversely, Hubbard's marquee sign on West Eighth Street reminded students of the date of the address. Plainfield Public Schools spokesman Eric Jones said Tuesday he was not aware of any complaints regarding the address being voiced to the district's administrative offices, and Hubbard principal Gwynetta Joe said she received "no feedback of negative nature" from any parent at the school of more than 350 students.

Student applause echoing off the Hubbard auditorium's high ceilings drowned out the televised roar from Virginia during Obama's introduction, shown on a broad screen hanging over the room's stage.

Joe said she was particularly encouraged by Obama's recommendation that students set specific goals for themselves, saying it reflected an initiative the school launched when classes started late last week. Hubbard students have been asked to write down three different types of goals for themselves this

year, Joe explained, and those goals will be posted directly above each student's locker as constant reminders.

"We have been given a charge this year, and we will commit to that charge," Joe told students. "President Obama kicked it off for us, but it's our job, our goal, our mission this year to carry out those responsibilities."

Eighth-grader Russell Clark said Tuesday that one of his long-term goals is to earn an advanced degree in education. He, Shiasiah and fellow Hubbard student leadership initia-

tive committee members Lisa Cejnowski and Marlan Dulaney addressed the student body after Obama's address, outlining a few of their own ideas on the importance of education.

Russell's address even included a jestful warning for vice principal Scot Burkholder.

"I plan to return to Plainfield to become a vice principal," Russell said. "So watch out, Mr. B," he added.

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