

News Release

Dobbs Ferry Middle School Students Analyze President Obama's State of the Union Address In the White House's virtual "Big Block of Cheese Day"

Dobb Ferry, N.Y., January 29, 2015-- On Wednesday, January 21st, Dobbs Ferry Middle School 6th graders in Jennifer Hickey's social studies classes participated in an unusual event sponsored by the White House and President Obama called "Big Block of Cheese Day," where members of the Obama administration personally answer questions about the President's State of the Union speech via social media. According to "The White House blog," this almost 200 year-old tradition pays "fromage" to the days of President Andrew Jackson who had a 1,400 pound block of cheese hauled into the main foyer of the White House in February 1837 for an open house with thousands of citizens and his staff. While snacking on slabs of cheddar, they discussed the issues of the day.

Dobbs Ferry Middle School students, working in small groups based on interest, read one of four sections from President Obama's State of the Union Address the following morning. The areas they focused on were the Economy, Education, Energy and Environment and Immigration. As the group read through the transcripts, they are also paid attention to citing evidence to support their analysis of the text. Finally, each group created a question to submit to various members of the White House staff in hopes of receiving a response. Ms. Hickey tweeted out their questions that day.

The students didn't have to wait too long for answers to their queries. That afternoon, they received responses directly from members of the Department of Health & Human Services, the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. Other member of the President's staff and cabinet who were online fielding questions included Dr. Jill Biden, Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, Secretary of Labor Tom Perez, Senior Advisor Dan Pfeiffer and many others. For a full listing of administration members who were available, please visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/01/16/big-block-cheese-day-back-and-its-feta-ever>

Questions that Ms. Hickey's class directed to the President's top advisors and their replies follow:

Question #1:



Jennifer Hickey@MsHM211

#AskTheWH @Interior What are some examples of the millions of jobs provided by the oceans besides fishermen? **#DFMS6thgrade** - 21 Jan



US Dept of Interior@Interior

@MsHM211 Traditional and renewable energy, science, fish and wildlife/nps have folks working on oceans **#AskTheWH**

06:45 PM - 21 Jan 15

Question #2:

[#AskTheWH](#) [@EPA](#) Why is climate change such a big problem now, even though the climate was always changing? [#DFMS6thgrade](#)



U.S. EPA [@EPA](#)

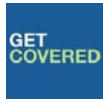
[.@MsHM211](#) Weather is more volatile now, too. Climate change means change happens faster & is less predictable. [#AskTheWH](#)

Question #3:



Jennifer Hickey [@MsHM211](#)

[#asktheWH](#) [@HHSGov](#) are you looking to increase the \$250 rebate for people with medicare who fell into the "donut hole" in 2015?- 21 Jan



HHS.gov [@HHSGov](#)

[.@MsHM211](#) [#ACAisWorking](#) to close the donut hole by 2020. 8.2M seniors have already saved an avg \$1,407/ea. [medicare.gov/part-d/costs/c....#AskTheWH](#)

“This is the first time that we have participated in the 2nd annual Big Block of Cheese Day and tweeted with White House administration officials,” said Ms. Hickey. “We regularly analyze primary and secondary source documents as a component of the NYS Social Studies curriculum and the Common Core Learning Standards in Literacy.”

What made the White House resurrect The Big Block of Cheese Day? The primary reason according to the blog ... “Making President Obama’s administration the most open and accessible in history.” The secondary reason... “We thought it’d be a ‘gouda’ idea to ‘brie’ it back!”

For more information, please contact:

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