



7TH ANNUAL BACK TO SCHOOL BASH • SEPTEMBER 22, 2017

STUDENT REMARKS

ISAIAH BOWMAN (DC PREP BENNING CLASS OF 2018)

Good evening everyone. Great to see so many of you here. My name is Isaiah Bowman and I am an 8th grader at DC Prep Benning.

DC Prep has helped me become the person I am today. With an education, you can go after anything you want in life and that's what DC Prep has given me. I have considered how I want to contribute to the world because of the way DC Prep has opened my mind.

During a schoolwide event about injustice in America, my social studies teacher, Mr. Ray, told us that if we wanted to see good in the world we couldn't sit by and complain. We had to actually work for it. No one can give you what you want to see in the world but you. This inspired me to take my work more seriously so that I can become a lawyer. If I can start a law firm to help minorities and individuals who can't afford lawyers there will be more people contributing to society because they are not incarcerated. I want to make things better for people who don't have a voice.

DC Prep also makes it safe to discuss sensitive subjects at school. They challenge us to think for ourselves, form opinions, and disagree respectfully. In Social Studies, we debate whether we would be a Loyalist or a Patriot during the Revolutionary War. We examine stereotypes and talk about why they are harmful. Right now, we're answering the question: Should schools allow freedom of expression or should they limit it? There doesn't seem to be much difference of opinion among the students!

I've developed a work ethic and drive to become better because DC Prep challenged me. Even though the work load and expectations can be a lot, they bring out the best in the students. The teachers push us to our limits because they believe in us. They give us the tools for success, and I can't thank them enough.

Benjamin Franklin said, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." He could have been talking about DC Prep. Thank you.



ANTHONY ALVAREZ-SILVA (DC PREP BENNING CLASS OF 2018)

Good evening, my name is Anthony Alvarez-Silva. I'm an 8th grader at DC Prep Benning and a member of its first graduating class. I'm here to tell you about my beloved school, DC Prep.

When I was eight years old, my family moved to Washington from El Salvador. Amazingly, we moved into an apartment building right across the street from DC Prep Benning. I looked out the window and there was my new school. I enrolled at DC Prep as a 3rd grader.

It was a very rough transition. I didn't know English, or the alphabet, or how to pronounce words. Some of the kids made fun of me – but kids are kids. Others had sympathy. The teachers, though, always supported me. They knew I couldn't speak well so when I had questions they asked me to write them in Spanish. That way I could keep up with the work even if I couldn't speak up in class. But it didn't work, and I made straight Fs for almost the whole year. A bilingual teacher continued to work with me and suddenly it all made sense. I started getting all As, and I've been getting them ever since. At DC Prep, you aren't expected to be automatically smart, instead you are supported, challenged, and helped to do what you think is beyond your limits.

My old school in Salvador was nothing like DC Prep. You were expected to be smart and if you weren't you were punished – either hit by the teacher or called terrible names. When I was in 2nd grade the teacher told the class that if anyone tore their paper she would send them back to 1st grade. As a 2nd grader that was about the worst thing you could imagine. A girl who has just transferred into the class accidentally ripped her paper and she sent her to 1st grade – not for a few days, or weeks, or months, but for the *whole year*. I never saw her again.

Another thing I have learned at DC Prep that's different from Salvador is that there are many different perspectives on issues. You don't have to think just one way. And you can open up a whole new wide world for yourself if you look at things from different points of view.

Now that I'm in the 8th grade I've started to look at high schools. When I think back to five years ago I couldn't have imagined this. I've already visited some of the top schools in and around Washington. In July, I went to a summer program at Episcopal High School. And because of DC Prep and all I have learned there, that transition was very smooth.

I want to close by thanking everyone at DC Prep, and thanking *you* for supporting the best network of schools in the entire world!