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OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Dear Sir Obama: Presidential Advice

By **JORY JOHN**

Every day after school about 65 children come to our center to get help with their homework. The place is always vibrant, but on Nov. 5, 2008, the 20 tutors in the room essentially played zone defense to keep things in order. For the students, the election of Barack Obama had overturned their world.

The children had been interested in the election all year but few of them, truth be told, really thought Mr. Obama would be elected. When he won, their talk quickly and excitedly turned to what would happen next.

We decided to channel this energy into a writing assignment. We asked our students — not just those in San Francisco, but ones in Ann Arbor, Mich.; Boston; Chicago; Los Angeles; New York; and Seattle — to offer their thoughts, hopes and advice to Mr. Obama in handwritten letters (many of which came with drawings). Here is the result of their work; some letters have been edited for space.

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Dear Sir Obama,

These are the first 10 things you should do as president:

1. Make everyone read books.
2. Don't let teachers give kids hard homework.
3. Make a law where kids only get one page of homework per week.
4. Kids can go visit you whenever they want.
5. Make volunteer tutors get paid.
6. Let the tutors do all the thinking.
7. Make universities free.
8. Make students get extra credit for everything.
9. Give teachers raises.
10. If No. 4 is approved, let kids visit the Oval Office, but don't make it boring.

— Mireya Perez, age 8, San Francisco

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Dear Obama,

If I were president I would have fun, because I could run fast.

— Kenja Zelaya, age 6, Los Angeles

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Dear President/Mr. Obama,

The best thing about living in the White House would be running around like a maniac. The thing I would like least is the work.

— Holly Wong, age 9, San Francisco

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Dear President Obama,

I am small, quiet, smart. I love to swim and play basketball. My mom and dad are from the Dominican Republic. I am going to the Dominican Republic next year. I think you should try to change the world by building shelters for the people who live in the streets. It's the beginning of January, and it's cold. Good luck being the president.

— Pamela Mejia, age 11, Boston

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Dear President Obama,

Here is a list of the first 10 things you should do as president:

1. Fly to the White House in a helicopter.
2. Walk in.
3. Wipe feet.
4. Walk to the Oval Office.
5. Sit down in a chair.
6. Put hand-sanitizer on hands.
7. Enjoy moment.
8. Get up.
9. Get in car.
10. Go to the dog pound.

— Chandler Browne, age 12, Chicago

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Dear President Obama,

If I were president, I would tell people to not talk too much. It wastes time. I'd also say to war: no more, no more, no more!

— Catherine Galvan, age 6, Chicago

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Dear Obama,

I have grown up with a very liberal mom and a very conservative dad. Thank you for bringing my parents somewhat closer together. :) You are my idol Mr. Barack — I am partly African-American and I am very happy to see an African-American leading this country.

— Olivia Roper-Caldbeck, age 12, Seattle

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Dear Pres. Obama,

Good job on winning. I heard about Area 51. I wanted to ask you if there are any U.F.O.'s there. I think that you should tell people in public the truth about Area 51. You would just maybe say, "That we will take care of it." And do it.

— Edwin Jara, age 9, New York

Dear President Obama,

Could you help my family to get housecleaning jobs? I hope you will be a great president. If I were president, I would help all nations, even Hawaii. President Obama, I think you could help the world.

— Chad Timsing, age 9, Los Angeles

Jory John, program director at 826 Valencia, a nonprofit writing and tutoring center, is the editor of the forthcoming "Thanks and Have Fun Running the Country: A Collection of Kids' Letters to President Obama," from which some of these letters are drawn.

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