

# Montgomery County Region of the Maryland Association of Student Councils

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## *Student Affairs Office*

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*Special Elections Committee Presents the*

## **Election of the Student Member of the Board of Education Nominating Convention**

***March 1, 2012***

***Auditorium***

***Poolesville High School***

# **Voters Guide**

*Published by the Special Election Committee of the Montgomery County Region of the Maryland Association of Student Councils in cooperation with the Montgomery County Board of Education and the Montgomery County Public Schools.*



*35<sup>th</sup> Student Member of the Board of Education*  
***Nominating Convention Agenda–March 1, 2012***  
*Poolesville High School*

Presiding: MCR President

12:30 p.m. Call to Order–MCR President  
Special Elections Administrator Report  
Current & Past Members of the Board of Education  
Any Visiting Members of the Board of Education  
Others as Invited

Candidates' Speeches

Question and Answer Period I

2:20 p.m. First Ballot - voting

2:40 p.m. Announcement of Results of First Ballot  
Question and Answer Period II

*Students should have questions approved at the screening station*

3:55 p.m. Ballot - voting

Delegates should vote, enjoy a snack provided by the host school  
in the cafeteria, then remain in the cafeteria for the conclusion of the convention.

4:25 p.m. Announcement of Ballot Results

4:30 p.m. Adjournment

**The Candidates** *(alphabetical order)*

Ms. Marisa Clery	Rockville High School
Ms. Lissette Escobar	Richard Montgomery High School
Ms. Olivia Ferrante	Damascus High School
Mr. Jeff He	Richard Montgomery High School
Mr. John Mannes	Northwest High School
Mr. Kevin Traore	Rockville High School
Mr. Dino Zagami	Sherwood High School

*The candidate profiles have been prepared by the candidates and do not necessarily represent the views of the Special Election Committee, the Montgomery County Region of the Maryland Association of Student Councils, or Montgomery County Public Schools. The Special Election Committee cannot assure the accuracy of the statements contained in the document. The profiles are printed in an unedited form.*

*Note– candidates were limited to a two page or 800 word profile. At the end of the profile, each candidate has given his/her response to the following questions:*

- a) Understanding how the Board of Education functions, what are your top three realistic goals for your term if you are elected?
- b) Every year, Montgomery County Public Schools is forced to make more and more budget cuts, what programs do you feel are the most important to students and how will you advocate for these programs?

*Note: All convention participants are required to remain on the campus of the school, in the specified areas, during the entire convention. Please do not register delegates, alternates, or observers unless they can stay for the entire proceedings. All students, except candidates, candidate helpers, and authorized members of the special elections committee are required to ride the provided buses.*



**Marisa Clery**  
Candidate Profile  
Grade 10 Rockville High School  
Marisa\_P\_Clery@mcpsmd.org  
www.marisaforsmob.webs.com

Throughout history, when Americans have felt underrepresented, they have fought for their rights, and it is now time for the students of Montgomery County to fight for theirs. It is my mission to make sure that the voice of every single student in

Montgomery County is heard and I will focus my term on students' rights.

I have had the pleasure of talking with so many students in this county, all of whom are amazingly invested in getting the best education possible and championing their rights as citizens. As the Student Member of the Board of Education, I vow to protect those rights. I believe that if we join together and advocate for what we believe in, we can ensure that our voices are heard and listened to.

I know that together we can make a difference and change the politics as usual in this county. Budget cuts will need to be made, but I know that if we streamline policies and eliminate waste to form the most efficient school system possible, we will be able to continue and grow all the programs we have grown to love, while exploring even more opportunities to learn. I have the leadership experience and vision to actually make the tough decisions necessary to ensure the students of Montgomery County an efficacious future. I will be as passionate, vocal, and persistent as I can be to represent the student body of Montgomery County as your next SMOB.

**I Support:**

- Student evaluations of teachers
- The removal of any type of Loss of Credit (LC) policy
- Expanding SMOB voting rights
- Expanding cell phone rights to middle schoolers
- Continued funding for school-sponsored programs
- Closing the achievement gap
- Easier practices for reporting bullying
- School modernization and continued funding to green initiatives
- STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education
- The continuation and expansion of magnet, IB, and Edison programs
- Continued transportation to magnet programs
- Curriculum 2.0
- Protecting funding to special education
- Returning funding to School Resource Officers and safety employees
- An increased cost of living adjustment for teachers

## **I Oppose:**

- Any type of LC policy or disciplinary measure as a direct result of attendance
- Cutting transportation funding
- Exorbitant parking permit fees
- Random locker searches and drug testing
- Increasing class sizes
- The Maintenance of Effort policy that could cause Montgomery County to lose state aid
- Financial Literacy as a graduation requirement
- Programs like No Child Left Behind that restrict a teacher's ability to teach
- Teachers not being held accountable for breaking grading policy

### ***a) Understanding how the Board of Education functions, what are your top three realistic goals for your term if you are elected?***

I will work to ensure that SMOB voting rights are expanded so the SMOB is a full voting member, instill student evaluations of teachers, and remove the LC policy. With full voting rights, a goal which is extremely attainable, the SMOB will be able to effectively represent Montgomery County. Secondly, I will institute student evaluations of teachers. Students depend on effective teachers and students' opinions deserve to be heard. Finally, I will fight to remove the LC policy as it is over-reactive and inefficient. The current grading policy accounts for unexcused absences, and a good student should not fail simply due to a few absences. In short, I will support legislation that increases students' rights and values the students' voice.

### ***b) Every year, Montgomery County Public Schools is forced to make more and more budget cuts, what programs do you feel are the most important to students and how will you advocate for these programs?***

I feel certain that if we take a hard look at our budget, we can liberate funds to make sure we can continue magnet programs and bussing to those programs, sustain our special education program at the great caliber that it operates today, and fund more STEM classes; as STEM learning will comprise a large portion of the future economy. I will present logical solutions to budget issues so it is evident that we can continue these programs.

## **Education and Experience:**

2010 - Present; Rockville High School - International Baccalaureate Program

*-It's Academic Team; B Team Captain*

*-Mock Trial Team*

*-National Spanish Honors Society*

2012 – Lobbied members of Congress to support the Girl Scouts' "To Get Her There" initiative

2011 – Attended the Women in Public Service Project, run by Hillary Clinton, where I represented Girl Scouts to Madeleine Albright, Gloria Steinem, and the President of Kosovo.

2002 – Present; Active member of the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

*-Bronze Award for Community Service*

*-Silver Award for Community Service*

2007 - 2010; Eastern Middle School - Humanities and Communication Magnet

*-Eastern Middle School Drama Department*

*-Eastern Middle School Newspaper*

2005 - 2007; Lucy V. Barnsley Elementary School - Gifted and Talented Magnet

2002 - 2005; Flower Valley Elementary School



# **Lissette Escobar**

## **Candidate Profile**

### **Grade 11 Richard Montgomery HS**

[Lissette Escobar@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Lissette_Escobar@mcpsmd.org)

Every year we, the students of Montgomery County, elect a one student to represent the

sole student voice on the Board of Education. Although Montgomery County has been hit hard with severe budget cuts, a SMOB has been there every step of the way. The students' excellence is the inspiration and pride that continues to give MCPS its confidence and continuous success. Through the students, MCPS has gained nationwide recognition that would not have been received if the students did not show the same passion and motivation for their studies, as demonstrated by MCPS Staff. The students of MCPS illustrate the vivid and successful future for this county, which makes it a distinguished and honorable school system.

This year, I served as the MCR Lobbying Director, Montgomery County Advisory Council Lobbying Director and the MASC State Legislative Affairs Appointed Committee Member. Through my various lobbying experience, not only lobbying at the county, but also at the state level, I have analyzed the target spots needed to be addressed by our student population.

Next year, the Board of Education has to continue combat budget cuts, and meeting Maintenance of Effort requirements. Also, the SMOB will be assigned with yet again another battle at the Maryland General Assembly to pass SMOB voting rights in MCPS.

As SMOB I would represent your voice as a fellow student of this distinguished school system. I have the experience and qualities to ensure that your voice is heard and that we continue to hold ourselves to higher standards in education every year.

#### **Education**

Richard Montgomery HS, 2011—Present

*IB Program*

Poolesville HS, 2008—2011

*Humanities Magnet Program*

Shady Grove MS, 2005—2008

#### **I support:**

- full funding of the FY 2013 Budget at Maintenance of Effort level
- full Montgomery County SMOB voting rights
- closing the readiness gap and achievement gap
- student advocacy
- youth involvement

#### **I oppose:**

- the Maintenance of Effort penalty
- cutting academic intervention teachers, music teachers, counselors, and security staff
- excessive or random hall sweeps and drug testing
- inconsistent grading and disciplinary policies
- increasing class sizes
- inconsistent school parking fees
- requiring HSAs for graduation

## **Leadership & Experience**

### **(2011-2012)**

- ❖ MCR Lobbying Director
- ❖ CEO of the International Youth Dynamics Foundation
- ❖ Maryland Association of Student Councils Facilitator
- ❖ Montgomery County Student Advisory Council Lobbying Director
- ❖ Maryland Association of Student Councils Student Legislative Affairs Committee Appointed Member
- ❖ Hispanic Youth Institute Facilitator
- ❖ Member of the National Youth Association

### **(2010-2011)**

- ❖ MCR Vice President
- ❖ Maryland Association of Student Councils Facilitator
- ❖ Class President at Poolesville High School
- ❖ Hispanic Society of Poolesville High School Vice President
- ❖ Member of the Special Elections Committee
- ❖ Member of the Lobbying Committee of the SMOB Council
- ❖ Graduate of Youth Leadership Montgomery 2010
- ❖ Member of the National Youth Association

#### ***a) Understanding how the Board of Education functions, what are your top three realistic goals for your term if you are elected?***

Firstly, reaching out to the students is always important. When it is election time, SMOB candidates are always around the school system seeking votes, but after those short weeks our SMOB tends to disappear. I would like to be an active presence for the student voice and how it impacts our education by making time in my schedule to visit schools around the county at least twice a month. Secondly, it is about time our SMOB receives full voting rights, except on negative personnel. Our own Board of Education unanimously voted that our SMOB should be given those rights and we must be persistent in our lobbying efforts to the Maryland General Assembly so that they comply and respect the wishes of our own Board. Thirdly, I would maintain the current sites that the SMOB has, but update them often and increase awareness of such sites. This year there was a miscommunication over a yoga pants incident that caused 'MCPS' to trend worldwide on Twitter. This is where the SMOB voice would have helped the students of MCPS, by helping them realize rumor from fact and increase awareness of their student rights and responsibilities.

#### ***b) Every year, Montgomery County Public Schools is forced to make more and more budget cuts, what programs do you feel are the most important to students and how will you advocate for these programs?***

The number of students in each classroom should not increase due to budget cuts. As many would testify, most of our classrooms are filled with students, who at times do not receive the attention they need to succeed. Monetary issues should never affect the quality of education students receive in our county. Asking one teacher to supervise 30 students and to ensure their education success is a tremendous responsibility. Although we have some of the best teachers, we also have to realize not everything is possible. I would advocate for no budget cuts that would affect the students in our classrooms, especially classroom sizes. It is the responsibility for the Board of Education to ensure the success and achievement of our students and to avoid hindering our students' education by increasing classroom sizes.



**Olivia Ferrante**  
Candidate Profile  
Grade 11 Damascus High School

No candidate profile was submitted by the 4:00 p.m., Monday, February 6, 2012, deadline





## Jeff He

### Candidate Profile

Grade 11 Richard Montgomery HS

Jeffrey\_He@mcpsmd.org

I am proud of Montgomery County and its hard working staff, bright students, and dedicated SMOBs. The students are a living testament of what can be achieved if we put our hearts to it. Though the past few years have been difficult, we have accomplished much and MCPS is currently ranked as one of the best school systems in the country.

Yet, we can not stop here, because if we ever stop working towards greatness, we will falter.

Montgomery County doesn't need dreamers, we need doers. We need a SMOB who is not afraid to roll up his sleeves and face the issues. We need a SMOB who doesn't just promise fiscal responsibility, but has read the 2 billion dollar budget and has a solid understanding. We need a SMOB who does not forget about his people, a SMOB who doesn't disappear after being elected. We need a SMOB who is willing to take risks, a SMOB who is willing to stand up to bullying.

I have worked in student government on many issues and I know what it takes to achieve realistic goals. I understand what a SMOB can do and can not do. Most importantly, I understand who I work for. I understand that it is about the students because who do teachers teach? Administrators administrate? Counselors counsel? The students. The students are at the heart of the school system. That is why, every year, we spend 2.1 billion dollars on our 144,064 students. It's because our students are the best investment that this county can make. It's because we care about our students.

With these things in mind, I ask that you invest in me, that you give me a chance to be your next SMOB, because if we don't take a chance, we don't stand a chance.

#### **I Support:**

- Initiatives that target bullying
- Continuation of Free Ride On and Metro Buses
- Cell Phones and iPods in Middle Schools and High Schools
- Extra Credit
- AA exemption (Students that get As both quarters can opt out of the final exam)
- Open Lunch in more schools
- Wider Variety of Classes and Reinstatement of Driver's Ed as an elective credit
- Energy efficiency and green initiatives
- Fully funded MCPS budget and Expanded SMOB voting rights
- Wider range of after school activities that meet student interests
- Better school lunches that are both nutritious and delicious
- Construction of new schools and upgrades of old ones
- Installation of cameras on the exterior of buses

## **I Oppose:**

- Current Attendance Intervention Practice (LC policy)
- Tabled Curfew/Loitering bill
- Short lunch periods
- Cutting art, tech, or drama courses
- Cuts to Magnets, GT, IB, ROTC, Edison programs and their transportation
- Staff violations of a Student's rights
- Increases in class sizes and Overcrowding of Buses
- Financial literacy as a graduation requirement
- Exorbitant parking permit fees
- Cutting Outdoor Education and other field trips

## **Education**

2009 – Present:	Richard Montgomery HS <i>Magnet International Baccalaureate Program</i>
2006-2009:	Roberto Clemente MS <i>Math/Science/Computer Science Magnet Program</i>
2004-2006:	Clearspring ES <i>Gifted and Talented Program</i>
2000-2004:	Washington Grove ES

## **Leadership and Experience**

- Maryland Association of Student Councils
  - *Delegate and Workshop Trainer*
- Montgomery County Region (MCR-SGA)
  - *Public Affairs Director*
- Richard Montgomery HS
  - *Class of 2013 President*
  - *MCR Liaison*
- Chinese National Honor Society, Richard Montgomery HS Chapter
  - *Co-President*
- National Youth Association
  - *Director of Communications*
- Student Member of the Board of Education Council
  - *Chief of Staff*
- City of Rockville Unity in Diversity
  - *Co-Founder*

**Question A:** As SMOB, I want to work towards expanding SMOB voting rights, allowing cell phones in middle schools, and fighting bullying. These are goals that are both feasible and important to students. SMOB voting rights and cell phone privileges have seen much progress, but these issues have not yet been resolved and I plan to finish what has been started. Bullying is another important issue, and at times has led to student suicides. Bullying of all sorts is never acceptable and I will work with school administrations and the Board of Education to draft policy to let the county know that we take this issue very seriously.

**Question B:** The MCPS budget is limited, but it is important that we still protect programs that students care about most such as Magnet, GT, IB, Edison programs, ROTC, Free & Reduced meals, and Free Ride on Buses. These are far-reaching programs that affect a great number of students. It will be a tragedy if they were cut, since these programs are important to our county and contribute to its continued educational success. I would protect these programs by making sure that we eliminate wastefulness and that the County Council supports the MCPS budget.



# John Mannes

## Candidate Profile

### Grade 11 Northwest High School

John\_B\_Mannes@mcpsmd.org  
John4Smob.com

Remember to like John For SMOB on Facebook and subscribe to our tweets to follow our campaign

Montgomery County Public Schools, a complex honeycomb of administrators, students, parents, teachers and political leaders, we are the largest and most progressive district in the State of Maryland. As a result, we are also one of the hardest counties to govern. All of our county's stakeholder groups expect their needs to be met with as little sacrifice as possible. As students, we are fortunate to have an advocate that can cut through the bureaucracy to make real and tangible changes. In just under a decade, we as students have rallied together and killed the curfew bill, brought cell phones to school lunches, and convinced our county to give us the day off on Inauguration Day.

Two things you have probably heard every year in SMOB elections are "the budget" and "communication". The biggest misconception among not only students but SMOB candidates is their actual power. The student member sits as 1 of 8 on a Board that votes on issues from appealed expulsions to teacher's salaries and all the way back to program funding. The SMOB, as it currently stands, fails to have a vote on the budget. This is why year after year you never see "change". This however, is not to say the SMOB is not powerful. We just have to work for it. What makes a good SMOB is a student who can go beyond his/her power on the board and interact with the other governmental organizations that directly impact us here in Montgomery County. The point of view that I bring is one that encompasses all departments of government & the political systems that run our communities. I understand where money comes from. I have extensive lobbying experience with County Council Members, both state and county Board of Education Members, and the Senators and Delegates in Annapolis. I hope to use this kind of action oriented background experience to insight real advancements in what a SMOB is capable of doing. I won't make any promises but I will get every item listed on my platform and any issue brought to me by a student heard and given its full chance to be changed. It just takes a little work.

#### I SUPPORT:

- ✓ Cell phone use during lunch for middle schoolers
- ✓ Closing the achievement gap
- ✓ Green initiatives
- ✓ Reform to the Capital Improvement & school modernization process
- ✓ Exterior bus cameras to catch cars that drive past school buses
- ✓ Improved school lunches
- ✓ Standardized parking fees
- ✓ Better reporting practices for incidence of bullying
- ✓ SMOB voting rights
- ✓ Simplification of the Student Rights & Responsibilities Handbook
- ✓ Science Technology Engineering & Math (STEM) education
- ✓ Race to the Top
- ✓ Magnet, IB, & Edison programs
- ✓ Curriculum 2.0
- ✓ Teacher evaluations with student input
- ✓ Outdoor Education funding
- ✓ Funding for School Resource Officers and other safety employees
- ✓ An increased cost of living adjustment (COLA) for teachers salaries
- ✓ Funding for staff development & resource teachers
- ✓ Magnet busing

#### OPPOSE

- The proposed Curfew Bill & Loitering Bill
- The LC policy & Attendance intervention in coordination with threatened credit loss
- Maintenance of Effort policy that causes Montgomery County to lose State aid
- Financial Literacy and other newly proposed graduation requirements
- No Child Left Behind that restricts teachers ability to teach
- Increased class sizes

## LEADERSHIP & EXPERIENCE

Montgomery County Region (MCR)-SGA (HS County SGA) - Chief of Staff (11) Deputy Special Elections Administrator (10) Montgomery County Junior Councils (MCJC) Middle School Council Liaison

Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) (State SGA) - Montgomery County Delegate for the annual Ocean City Convention, **Workshop Trainer** at Legislative Session, High School/ Middle School Fall Conference, **Delegate to Maryland State Department of Education Conference (MSDE)**

National Youth Association (NYA) - Maryland State Director, Maryland State Services Director, attended Inaugural gala with Congressman Chris Van Hollen, testified against the Curfew Bill and lobbied for the Dream Act, led canvasses and registered youth across the state to vote, interviewed by various media outlets about youth rights

Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) - Legislative Chair, planned forum in Annapolis for Governor Martin O' Malley and Comptroller Peter Franchot to discuss Financial Literacy. Advocated for Financial Literacy Day

Student Member of the Board of Education's Council (SMOB Council) - Deputy Director of Lobbying, testified to the Montgomery County Delegation of the Maryland House of Delegates in support of SMOB Voting Rights, lobbied Annapolis State Senators & Delegates on various youth related bills, involved in HYA Associates selection of the new Superintendent

Non-Profit & Charity Work - Raised money for the **Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network**, Served as a volunteer **election aid** for both the Obama election and midterm election

**a) Understanding how the Board of Education functions, what are your top three realistic goals for your term if you are elected?**

I have three main goals: getting SMOB voting rights, simplifying the Student Rights & Responsibilities handbook, and increasing communication between the various students groups that exist in the county. Getting SMOB voting rights would mean getting true student representation in budget decisions. Simplifying the Student Rights & Responsibilities handbook would make its contents more accessible for students. Finally, I am excited to propose creating a coalition of student leaders from groups that are already encouraging positive change in their communities thus forming a network in which the SMOB and other students can communicate in order to represent more of the county.

**b) Every year, Montgomery County Public Schools is forced to make more and more budget cuts, what programs do you feel are the most important to students and how will you advocate for these programs?**

I support funding for green initiatives, school modernization, and STEM programs as well as the Magnet, IB, and Edison programs. In addition, I believe we must reserve funding for Curriculum 2.0, school resource officers, staff development, our arts programs, and Outdoor Education. I realize most things on my platform require capital but much of it can be done by simply reorganizing the budget. The connectivity of the SMOB is a testament to the growing youth voice, and I would consider it a responsibility to consult my constituents whenever making a complex budget decision.

**Kevin Traore**

**Grade 10 Rockville High School**

No candidate profile was submitted by the 4:00 p.m., Monday, February 6, 2012, deadline





Dino Zagami  
Candidate Profile  
Grade 10 Sherwood High School  
Dino\_Zagami@mcpsmd.org  
<http://twitter.com/dinozagami>

For the past 34 years, the Student Member of the Board (SMOB) has essentially been the voice of the students before Montgomery County's Board of Education. Though the SMOB continues to gain influence and leverage on the Board, the students have continuously been denied a SMOB with full voting rights. Now more than ever, we need students to make their voices heard louder than before. Now more than ever, we need a SMOB who has the drive, passion, and commitment to make these goals a reality. Now more than ever, we need a good listener, as well as a strong speaker. My name is Dino Zagami, and I want to be your next SMOB.

In order to achieve these goals, I must have effective communication with my constituents. Dr. Joshua Starr has made excellent use of Twitter during his time in office. I think it would be most beneficial if I implemented this along with him, addressing the maximum amount of student needs possible. I want to make politics more accessible than it has ever been before, allowing students to take a direct vote using online surveys and having me bring their testimonies to the board. I want to make your voice have the power of almost 147,000. We deserve to be heard, because this is our school system.

**I SUPPORT**

Full SMOB voting rights  
Extending privileges of portable electronics to middle schoolers  
Improving nutrition and quality of school lunches  
Working closely with Dr. Starr to further utilize Twitter  
Curriculum 2.0  
Environmentally conscious policies  
Revision of Tech Credit to include computer based classes

**I OPPOSE**

Maintenance of Effort  
Current attendance policy  
Emphasis on standardized testing  
Current blocking of Social Networks

***a) Understanding how the Board of Education functions, what are your top three realistic goals for your term if you are elected?***

One of my primary goal is to collect student input when making decisions on the board. In order to make political decisions more relatable and accessible to students, online surveys would be conducted to gather data. My second goal would be to initiate a means for students to provide confidential feedback to teachers regarding their effectiveness. Finally, I want to advocate for full SMOB voting rights. Every year we are closer to passing legislation that would permit this, and I believe this year may finally be the year it happens.

***b) Every year, Montgomery County Public Schools is forced to make more and more budget cuts, what programs do you feel are the most important to students and how will you advocate for these programs?***

If I were to make such a large decision as voting on the budget, I feel that activity buses and busing to magnet schools are important because they let the students do what they need to do every day, and they should be protected at many costs. I also feel that corollary sports are very important and should be protected, as well as the general athletics and arts programs. I would like to stress that before making a decision like the budget, I would gather a large amount of student input.