

Election of the 28th Student Member of the Board of Education

MCR Special Election Committee 2005 Voters Guide



Election Day
April 27, 2004

Sebastian Johnson

The current standing of the SMOB is the result of years of successful representation of the student voice and passionate service on the Board of Education. Now is the time to expand the role of the SMOB to include more advocacy on behalf of the students of Montgomery County. If elected SMOB, I want to reach out and communicate not only with the students of our county, but also with community leaders and organizations, and with student government establishments in other counties in order to further legitimize the student voice. Current efforts by the SMOB to communicate with students, the biggest being the Student Advisory Committee, have had mixed success. I hope to better communicate with students, to more accurately represent their concerns and opinions, and to present a student agenda that represents all students.



Platform

I support:

- Better communication with the students of Montgomery County
- Reform of the attendance policy – elimination of loss of credit (LC) policy
- Less emphasis on standardized testing
- Equal educational opportunities at all schools across the county
- Cell phone policy for middle school students based on high school policy
- More funding for schools in Red Zones
- Double-A exam exemption
- Keeping exam weight at 25 percent
- Full funding of public school construction, and lobbying the state for more resources
- Smaller class sizes
- Academy programs at high schools
- Closing the achievement gap by encouraging minority students to enroll in Honors and GT classes
- Support for community athletic teams and organizations as a way to encourage students to make positive connections with their peers
- Lowering academic eligibility requirements for participation in school athletics and sports
- More support and funding for Special Education and ESOL programs and students
- Celebrating the diversity of Montgomery County
- Full voting rights for SMOB

I Oppose:

- Random drug testing of student athletes
- The new grading policy – there are too many students, teachers, and parents who don't fully understand the new regulations for implementation to be effective
- County vending machine policy – more choice should be given to individual schools on vending machines

Education

- Currently a junior at Montgomery Blair High School, Communication Arts Program
- Takoma Park Middle School, Grades 6-8
- Piney Branch Elementary School, Grades 3-5
- Takoma Park Elementary School, Grades 1-2

Recent Leadership Experience

- 2001-2002 SGA President, Takoma Park Middle School
Delegate to Mont. County Junior Councils (MCJC)
- 2002-2003 Delegate to Mont. County Region of Stud. Councils
(MCR)
Freshman Class President, Montgomery Blair High School
- 2002-2004 Tutor, Takoma Park Middle School Homework Club
- 2003-2004 MLW Senior High Workshop Delegate
SGA Parliamentarian, Montgomery Blair High School
SGA Liaison to Class Governments, Mont. Blair HS
Candidate for Mont. County Central Democratic
Committee
- 2003-2005 State Lobbying Coordinator, MCR
Chairperson, Subcom. on Driving & Pedestrian Safety,

MCR

- Tutor, Piney Branch Science Saturday Club
- 2004-2005 SGA President, Montgomery Blair High School
Chairperson, State Lobbying Committee, MCR
Legislative Trainer, MD Assoc. of Stud. Councils

(MASC)

Founder and Co-Chair, Students for Sensible Government

Question 1: With MCPS' emphasis on academic rigor, with many students, cheating on homework, projects, tests, and exams is becoming common behavior. What can the school system do to help reinforce students' academic integrity and ethical decision-making?

Cheating is becoming more and more common. . In my opinion, students cheat for the same reason we have always cheated: it is easy. When examining why cheating is becoming a big problem in our county, we should remember that it is an individual choice. It is hypocritical to say that students should be able to make their own decisions regarding vending machines and driving, but not take responsibility for cheating. Students who cheat should be prepared to accept the consequences of their actions. This county can reinforce students' academic integrity and ethical decision-making by making it clear that cheating is unacceptable and that consequences will stand.

Question 2: Many MCPS schools now have resource officers roam the hallways at least once a week. Do you feel that this provides better safety within our schools? Elaborate on how you would approach making schools safer.

Making schools safer is a top priority. In recent years, security has become a pressing issue for our schools. Resource officers have done a great job of providing safety within our schools, and helping students and staff feel more secure. Safe classrooms promote a better environment for students to learn. Addressing the serious problems that affect our community like gang violence, teen drinking and drug use, and reckless driving, will help us reach our goal of safer schools.

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