

The first people I would like to thank are my parents. When I announced my final intentions to run for this position, I was a little worried about the reaction I would get from my parents. I was already pretty busy, and I was somewhat prepared for a disappointing look and a "well, if you think you can handle it!" But the smiles and promise to help went a long way, past that day and into the coming months which turned out to be much more challenging than we ever expected.

Thank you, Mom, for staying in the hospital with me 24 hours a day, and for calling the entire Shady Grove security team in to terminate that killer mouse under the radiator. Thanks also for driving me around the county, making sure I ate and slept during the campaign, and teaching me how to flirt with orthopedic assistants.

Dad, thank you for all your help with schoolwork, for the insightful discussions about issues, and for being very cool about campaign people trooping in and out at 1:30 a.m. My sister Juliana was also a big help. Julie, thanks for the hours you spent running up and down the stairs to do stupid errands and bring me everything under the sun while I was immobilized. Thank you also for the great pictures you always drew and for reminding me that it could always be worse -- I could always be back in second grade trying to elude the cootie team.

There are three people who were not born into my family, but could have been mistaken for Converses after all the time they spent with us, and also for the caring support and friendship they always had on hand. I knew there could be no campaign team comparable to Jon Sims, Mike Madden and Maury Apple, that first night we met to plan at Copelands. "You need a quote...Something powerful, but straightforward, to reach the people," said Jon. "I've got one, and I think we can put it on the front, fold this here, scan that picture onto this space, and shade this box for visual emphasis," said Maury. "That's a great quote Maury, but you spelled it wrong, and the punctuation goes inside the quotation marks," said Mike. That's a somewhat facetious breakdown, but you get the idea. The political experience and instinct, computer fluency, layout talent, verbal proficiency, and frenetic determined energy truly saved the day, and was the best campaign plan I could have had. In addition, if I had to spend late nights and hours of stressful situations with anybody, I couldn't have asked for it to be with better friends than these guys.

My next blush session goes to Steve Mummert. I called Steve at the last minute because I needed someone to go with me on a couple campaign trips that week. Well, I had to twist his arm, but I finally convinced him to miss three days of school, driving around the county in his boring '78 Camaro, and sitting in the back of auditoriums laughing at me. It was a tough job, but someone had to do it. Steve also became one of my closest friends that week, and was there to help me through some

difficult and frightening experiences. In addition, he was always invaluable in helping me gain perspective on a situation, by summing things up in this classic phrase of assessment: "ooo, bad."

People have told me I have a hard act to follow. I tell them they're wrong: I have at least four tough acts to follow. My first glimpse into the wonderful world of SMOB came when David Chang was kind enough to be my guest, along with Jon Sims, on my eighth grade class TV talk show, and then got up and walked off the set with his live lavalier microphone still attached to his shirt. I resolved that if I ever got a chance to be that cool, I would go for it. The next year I met Shervin, who gave me my first real taste of this job by letting me help out with his campaign, and tag along with him to several of his job responsibilities. Then there was Jon Sims, who shared several many 2 a.m. phone conversations about the wonders of SMOB. And then there's Carrie...Carrie, who begins all her encouraging pep talks by saying, "I mean, I don't want to scare you, but..." No seriously. Carrie, you've been an enormous help during this transitional period, and I don't know what I would have done without you. To Dave, Shervin, and Jon -- thank you for your encouragement and continuing inspiration, and for not growing up too much to still be a lot of fun.

There are numerous people who helped out in so many ways over the past few months, and I truly regret that I don't have the time to go through and thoroughly embarrass each one of you individually. Thanks Sean, Allison, Lilly, and the rest of the MCR/MCJC crew, especially Mike Michaelson, who for all the amazing feats of organization he pulls off should have a cape and his own comic book. Thanks John and Nick for your support and ideas. Thanks Mike for rounding up the RM posses on election morning. My appreciation to all my teachers and administrators for allowing me to make your lives difficult, especially Dr. Quelet, Mrs. Lilga, and Dr. Dahlberg. And my unending gratitude to all my friends, for your support at the nominating convention at WJ and numerous polling places on election morning, for bugging me about the history of Prussia, for discussions at Wendys, for nights of driving around listening to the police, for chicken soup and unwrapped straws, and for all the other moments that have helped keep me sane.

My last work of appreciation goes to my best friend, who also happens to be my sister. (Thanks for arranging that one, Mom and Dad!) Laurel has been, over the past few months, a campaign manager, psychiatrist, and fellow lunatic. Thanks for the tapes on my pillow at 3 a.m., the humpback whale recordings in the hospital, the notes on the milk bottle in the morning, and for identifying hospital visitors when I was on painkillers! You've been a big help and I guess I forgive you for not going to an MCPS school next year!

At this time, I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Vance, the Board members, and the Board staff. The friendly

welcomes and the unending offers for guidance during my initiation period have been helpful and appreciated. I would also like to take a minute to say how glad I am that I will have the opportunity to be part of this group next year. I have had the opportunity to be an honorary member of Board life for the past month, and as an observer there is at least one thing that I have learned for certain. Without a doubt, this is a group of people who are exceptionally dedicated to the students of Montgomery County. There are differing opinions and political subtleties and certainly no decision will ever please everybody, but as I observe debates that occur over even the smallest agenda item, I have been consistently impressed and proud to note the sincere and diligent concern from every single Board member over what will be best for the students. "Success for every student" is not just a motto to go on posters and letterheads, it is a phrase that I hear usually at least once during every board meeting.

I ran for this position because I feel a strong affinity for my peers and the community of Montgomery County, and I wanted to put every effort I could as an individual into making sure that the educational system was the best it possibly could be. I wanted to leave this year knowing I had done everything I could to see that every student who feels that he or she is a number on a roster or simply a face in the crowd knows that that is not true. I am proud to know that I will be working with a group of people who feel exactly the same, and who will be continuing to work for these goals when my term is finished.

This pretty much leads into what I wanted to conclude with tonight, and that's a promise -- not a campaign promise, not anything elaborate, just a very simple and very sincere pledge to every friend, student, staff member, and community member in Montgomery County - and that is to do my best. I've had exceptional role models for this position, and some exceptional support in getting here, and now I would like to simply say that I promise to do everything I possibly can to not only ensure that Montgomery County is second to none, but that every Montgomery County student knows that they are second to none as well.

Thank you.

Re: PRESENTATION TO MS. BAKER

On behalf of the members of the Board, Mrs. Gordon and Dr. Vance presented Ms. Baker with a photo album of her year on the Board as well as a certificate for her service as the first student Board member with virtually unlimited voting privileges.

Re: STATEMENT BY MS. BAKER

Last year I sat here and I talked about the road I would travel over my term as student board member. I talked about the challenges I would face in making decisions that would influence the education of students in Montgomery County. I sat here full of emotions - excitement - anticipating the beginning of this

unique experience and - trepidation - about the obstacles I would be facing in trying to make good, solid decisions. As I moved through the year, I did experience and learn a great deal. I have been able to participate in learning paths that have taught me things that could never be learned in a classroom. However, there have been some experiences I would have rather not faced - and when meeting these trials, I sometimes passed them with no trouble and sometimes I fell flat on my face. But, I like to think that I always got up ready to face the next one.

When I was thinking about what I would say tonight, I looked back at the beginning of my term to the goals I set for myself. Most of those goals were centralized around a very limited amount of knowledge of what could be accomplished during my term of office. So with new knowledge comes new goals.

Soon the Board will be discussing my motion to have American Sign Language validated as a foreign language credit instead of an elective. The Board will also discuss my motion of the possibility of interscholastic sports as a non-budgetary item.

This year I was the first student member to have the privilege to vote on the budget. A difficult, long and frustrating experience.

I continued the SMOB's monthly cable television show "Student Voices and Views" and meetings with the SMOBSAC (an advisory committee to the student board member made up of principal-appointed students from each high school and middle school in the county) - we met monthly to discuss a variety of issues that are important to the students today - such as violence, new academic programs, graduation requirements, sports, recycling and community service.

Without the guidance, understanding and tolerance of many people, I feel that I would not have been able to get through this year - so with your indulgence, I would like to thank these people:

My Mom and Dad - who supported and loved me, (and understood the rule from the Board of Education that student members do not have to clean their rooms). My sisters Rachel and Laura, most especially Laura who reminded me that having a social life was also important. My grandparents, particularly my grandfather Zimmerman for his love and everything he has done for me. To the rest of my family, I just need to say thanks for understanding when I had Board commitments and missed birthdays and family gatherings.

Thank you to all my friends: Scott, who was beside me from the beginning, believing that I could do it all and sticking with me through my ups and downs. Vanessa, who isn't here tonight, she is in Germany, but I want her to know that her love and kindness to me during the year was noticed and appreciated. Everyone at Einstein who has made my "occasional visits" there pleasurable, fun and, yes, educationally stimulating.

And finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the many people at the central office:

Roz Phillips - for watching over me

Mary Lou Wood - for helping me through "BOE history.101"

Melissa Woods - my sounding board who always gave me whatever time I needed to understand the workings of the budget

Gail Holder and Bev Jones - the supporting staff who treated me with respect

Tom Fess - everything they say about the ombudsman is true - he is a great guy and is always there to help

Dr. Vance - who truly believes that every child in MCPS can be successful and is willing to do just about anything to make SES a reality

Mrs. Gemberling - for becoming a friend and always giving me a smile when I needed encouragement

Dr. Rohr - who never once thought I was asking a silly question

Dr. Villani - you were always willing to take that extra time to answer my questions

Kitty Blumsack - who became my friend and taught me the importance of not taking myself too seriously

Mike Michaelson - always an inspiration and always reliable to the students of MCPS

And thank you to my colleagues, the Board of Education:

Dr. Cheung - thank you for being so friendly and funny

Mr. Ewing - thank you for showing me that dedication and true belief in education is what it is all about

Mrs. Brenneman - thank you for your belief that students in government are valuable to the system

Mrs. Fanconi - thank you for demonstrating that love of children can make a difference in the world

Ms. Gutierrez - thank you for enlightening me to what perseverance and education can accomplish

Mr. Abrams - thank you for the respect and friendship you have given me

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Mrs. Gordon - thank you for taking the extra time and effort to train me and guide me and for being so dependable - and especially for being my friend

Thanks to all of you for your dedication and belief in the students of Montgomery County, the future.

I would like to close by wishing Wendy good luck as she begins her year as the new student Board member. I tried to think of some parting words of wisdom, but find that there is nothing I can say to better prepare her, or make her a good Board member, except to tell you to always remember that you are representing all of Montgomery County - each student presently in the system and those just beginning their education journey - remember them when you vote on an issue - and never be afraid to vote from your heart - what you feel inside is usually right.

Good luck to you all, and thank you again. Bye-Bye.

Re: COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS AND
SUPERINTENDENT

Board members and Dr. Vance welcome Ms. Converse and praised the efforts of Ms. Baker as the sixteenth student Board member.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The vice president adjourned the meeting at 8:40 to a reception for Ms. Baker and Ms. Converse.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

PLV:mlw