



the many people that have helped, supported, and inspired me throughout my journey into this chair. First off, to my family: I love you all, and thank you for all of your day-to-day support, and the love that I received from Laytonsville, Hilton Head, Atlanta, Salisbury, Hamilton Square, Fairfax, Birmingham, and, soon to be, Dallas. Second to my friends -- did you hear that -- it is finally plural. Hugs and kisses to you all for putting up with me, for caring about me, for helping me, and most importantly for keeping me sane; to my Damascus High School (DHS) family, thank you all for understanding, for signing my yellow sheets without too much hassle, and for reminding me that I could do it after all; to Mr. B for keeping my ducks in a line, and to Mrs. Crumley for, inspiring me with all of your love and support and time in and out of the classroom; to Julie for everything; to Mike for believing in all of the students in all the classrooms in all of the world and for being a living definition of the student voice; to Ron and Linda for all of your help and guidance; to Kevie for simply being Kevie; and to Mr. Smith for starting it all, it is your fault that I am here anyway. And, oh yes, to Mr. Fish, who I had to write in red ink in my day planner so I would not forget him -- the trader and all. Thanks for letting me shine at DHS, and for always pushing me to reach my goals. And, just remember this coming April when you're watching the Damascus girls beat the Sherwood girls on the lacrosse field, that you are still a Hornet at least until I graduate. Thank you, again, to everyone I mentioned and to everyone I forgot to mention. I could not have done it without all of you.

In the past few weeks that I've been the student Board member-elect, I have learned that the good old trusty day planner is one of the best inventions ever created. It reminds me when I have meetings, when to clean my bathroom, when to tell my dad to watch me on television, when I need to go out to school, when I have to call people back, and when I have at least five minutes to get stressed out. It reminds me when I have a hot date planned (whoops not this year), when I need to remember to sleep, when I have to run a few miles and score a few hundred goals for Mrs. Crumley, and occasionally gives me a reminder of when to take a deep breath and just say no. Along with all the jam-packed days ahead of me, I am also looking forward to fulfilling part of a goal that began inside my little head in early elementary school. Back in 2nd grade when I made my first attempt at a research paper (not to Ms. Bertin's standards), I answered the question -- what do you want to do when you grow up -- with a long dissertation of how I wanted to be first woman President. I use to want to see my face sculpted across Mt. Rushmore, and my name listed in textbooks across the nation as one of the most recognized and important women of America. Well, that goal has definitely been questioned, shunned, praised, and eventually changed within my mind over the past ten years. I used to think that being the first woman President would be a position of simply great honor, truth, and respect, and a job that any woman would be proud and excited to hold. However, back when I was seven I did not quite understand the world of politics and the many facets that it contains. Now that I have taken a few baby steps into the wonderful world of politics, I realize more than ever that it is not simply a world of sunshine and rainbows, and it is not always a world of truth and respect either. Many of you, are probably thinking, well guess what kid that is not only the world of politics -- that is the real world, and unfortunately you are

probably right. But, when you ask any seven-year old that is not the answer you get. You do not hear about all the negative aspects of life. You hear about their dreams, their new toys, their trip to the beach, their day at school, and about what they want to be when they grow up. That is the great thing about being a kid. There is still hope. Kids believe that anything can happen, that you can reach the stars if you try, and that when you put your mind and your heart to do it anything is possible. Well, I am proud to still be a kid and to still have intangible dreams, and most of all to still have hope in this world and in this society.

I hope this year as the 20th student Board member, while I am overloaded with my many reminders, I will serve as a reminder to all of you as to what is really important in this school system and in this community. That it is not the politics or the deceit or the fighting that's important, but the students. And, I hope to serve as a reminder that the decisions we make are helping to shape a generation -- a generation that holds our future in their hands. I hope to serve as a reminder of what we try to teach our students, to always tell the truth, to always be respectful, to always believe in what you do, and to think before you speak. I hope to serve as a reminder of the fact that you can do anything when you put your mind to it, and that there is no "I" in team, and that the only way to be successful is to work as a team, a team that includes everyone. And, most importantly as a reminder that the students of our schools are the future of our county and our nation, and we must do our best to provide a well rounded and balanced education that will give them the skills and the desire to succeed in whatever they do.

I am not striving to change the world, but if by next July 1st when the next student Board member is sitting here nervously reading her or his speech, I have positively changed one student's life, or gotten one more student involved in something they love doing, convinced one more parent to be a part of their children's education, or caused a new light to shed on a conversation back in closed session, then all of the hard work will be more than worth it.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of you for listening to why I want to hold this position and to apologize for its length, but remember tonight is the only time I can sit here at this table and go on and on without Mr. Felton or the bell telling me to shut up. I am very proud to serve as the 20th student member on the Montgomery County Board of Education and I am very excited for the wonderful things that this year will entail, and hope that I am able to serve the students of this county with the respect and leadership that they deserve, and that the decisions I make will help many of our dreams to become reality. Because I truly believe that dreams are not always reality simply because society does not always allow them to be. As you all leave here tonight and go home to your houses to change your light bulbs, remember that one light bulb can brighten an entire room and one advocate can brighten an entire generation.

Thank you."

**Re: PRESENTATION TO MS. PRAGER**

On behalf of the members of the Board, Mr. Felton presented Ms. Prager with memorabilia of her stay on the Board of Education.

**Re: STATEMENT BY MS. PRAGER**

"Debbie, I would like to offer my congratulations and best wishes for a successful year. You have reached a milestone in your life and will be a great asset to the Board of Education. Your experience in serving the students of Montgomery County through MCR and MCJC will help you as you assume your responsibilities as the 20th student member. Debbie, I would like to tell you about the Board, staff, and superintendent in the manner in which I have come to know them. In doing so, you will hopefully will gain insight into the extraordinary capabilities of these people and also allow me to express my profound gratitude to them.

The first two people I started to work with were Roz Phillips and George Margolies, who soon became my Board Mom and Board Dad. They took me, like they are doing for you, under their wing and eased the transition. George proved to be especially helpful in answering my questions at each Board meeting.

Bea Gordon also helped me settle in. She has been my seat mate ever since and has kept me in line. She will do the same with you. If you need to leave the table, ask for her permission first.

In the past year, I have seen Board members grow and change. Nancy King has been an example of this. When Nancy and I testified to the Senate delegation in Annapolis, she stepped up into her position as Board vice president and represented us in a manner that brought admiration and respect from the Senators.

Annapolis and the state legislature were one of the best parts of being the student member primarily because of Lois Stoner. Lois is by title a lobbyist for the Board, but you would not know it because of her talent and skill in doing her job. She acts as a resource for the delegation giving them suggestions and responses. Because of her open, honest demeanor, the delegation and other state officials respect and trust her. I do as well. Lois is largely responsible for the passage of the sixth grade vote legislation, and I have had a great time in Anapolis, especially at Cafe Normandie with her.

Reggie Felton, our President, is much like Lois in that he is not confrontational but is instead a negotiator. Reggie is able to find common ground and compromise without

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sacrificing his principles. During the Preferred Choice debate, we held different positions, but I admired his reasoning and willingness to take the concerns of a community to heart.

Alan Cheung is distinguished by his deep love for children. Just by hearing him speak about his grandchildren or even looking at his ties, it is evident that he is a true child advocate. His relentless emphasis on Personal Student Profiles and technology show his desire to maximize the potential of each child.

Blair Ewing, like Alan, is one of the most interesting characters on the Board. He is a part of a dying breed, a rare, exotic specimen of the unadulterated liberal. Blair has a vision for public education and every time he votes, he does so with that vision in mind. He is true to his principles, steadfast in his nature, and consistent in his message.

Like Blair, Ana Sol Gutiérrez is firm in her commitment to ensuring that those who are not wealthy or white have equal opportunity for success. Ana is passionate about her causes and brings to the table an often under represented perspective.

Mona Signer, after being on the Board for only half a year has already made her mark. She is a strong woman and knows what she wants and goes after it hard.

One of the most impressive people I have had a chance to work with on the Board is the superintendent. Do not let his quiet demeanor fool you, he is powerful and brilliant. He is a role model for me. Debbie, take advantage of him; he has a tremendous amount to offer. The effectiveness of the superintendent is reflected in his staff: Mrs. Gemberling, Dr. Hahn and others.

Debbie, these people here at the table and in the surrounding rows have helped me become a better individual, and I know that they will impact on you as well. If I can be of assistance in helping you assume your duties or otherwise, you know you can contact me.

Board members, staff, and the superintendent have made this year so memorable for me and for this I am grateful. Debbie, maintain your commitment to excellence and maximize this Board's potential. Good luck in the coming year, and I look forward to seeing everyone on future July firsts and other happy occasions."

Re: **COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS  
AND THE SUPERINTENDENT**

Board members and Dr. Vance welcomed Ms. Wheat and thanked Ms. Prager for her work on the Board of Education and wished her well in all his future endeavors.

Re: **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Felton adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m. to a reception in the auditorium for Ms. Prager and Ms. Wheat.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

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