



Catonsville High School senior on board in new role

Student representative on school board

By Kevin Rector
krector@patuxent.com

Posted 9/30/09



(Enlarge) Catonsville High School senior Zoe Camp, left, the student representative on the county school board, and Lauren Yachera edit an article for the Catonsville Comet, the high school's newspaper. Camp's brother, Nicholas, served as the school board's student representative in 2004-2005. (Staff photo by Sarah Nix)

Zoe Camp loves to ask questions.

It's one of the first things people mention when asked to describe her, and something they notice almost immediately when meeting her.

"From a young age, she's always asked more questions than I could answer," said her mother, Andrea Camp.

This year, perhaps more than any other in her high school career, that inquisitiveness has come in handy.

It has been one of the Catonsville High School senior's best assets as the Baltimore County Board of Education's student representative, said board President JoAnn Murphy.

"She's got the mind of a journalist," Murphy said, making reference to the fact that Camp is also co-editor-in-chief of The Comet, Catonsville High's student

newspaper.

"She really probes into things."

Camp, who lives on North Beaumont Avenue in Catonsville, was appointed to the school board by Gov. Martin O'Malley this summer and was sworn in July 13.

She is the 12th Baltimore County student to be named to the board.

While Kenwood High senior Annette Karanja was the student representative last year, eight of the previous 11 student representatives have come from either Towson or Dulaney high schools or the Carver Center for Arts and Technology in Towson.

Their job is to provide a student's perspective on the issues that come before the board, and so far Camp has excelled in the role, Murphy said.

"She makes us aware that there are other ways of learning things," Murphy said.

Camp, 17, said she was nervous at her first board meeting in July because she "didn't know what to expect."

But, she said, she has adjusted to how the board operates and likes participating.

"I really am always glad to speak up," she said. "I love to talk. I just want to make sure I sound as eloquent as many of my peers."

Joseph Pallozzi, the board's representative from the First Councilmanic District that includes Catonsville and Arbutus, said Camp has no problem with that.

"Zoe is a very smart young lady who will help us make decisions," said Pallozzi, a Catonsville resident who sometimes carpools with Camp to the board's meetings in Towson.

"She brings a lot to the board."

That was evident at the most recent school board meeting Sept. 22, when Camp showed her confidence

multiple times by asking pointed, student-minded questions and freely giving her thoughts on various issues.

During a discussion about the county's new Articulated Instruction Module program, in which teachers catalogue students' progress in specific curriculum areas as a supplement to traditional report cards, Camp enthusiastically sang its praises and encouraged student involvement.

"I'm really hoping this is shared with the students. Too many times, it's all about the letter grade," Camp told the other board members.

"This will help break away from the cutthroat mentality that is often associated with the letter grade system."

Murphy smiled from her seat next to Camp.

"This is why we love our student board member, and the dose of the real way it is," Murphy said to the board.

At various points in the meeting, other board members referred to comments Camp had made, voicing their agreement and reiterating the importance of her insights.

Deborah Bittner, principal at Catonsville High, said her school is "very proud" to have Camp on the school board.

"She's quite a capable young lady," Bittner said. "And I've heard she does a wonderful job."

Melanie Coates, Camp's journalism adviser, called Camp a "natural writer" who was instrumental in moving *The Comet* online last year.

Coates said Camp is a "neat kid to be around," and that she was not surprised when the governor chose Camp for the board position.

"She wants to have her fingers in a lot of pies, because she wants to know everything that's going on," Coates said.

In joining the school board, Camp said she has become more aware of being a "stakeholder" in the county's education system, which all students are, she said.

She has also continued a family tradition with the job.

Her brother Nicholas was the board's student representative in 2004-05.

According to Andrea Camp, her son just graduated from Columbia University and is working at the university as a research assistant in cultural psychology. Among other things, he is studying student achievement gaps, a topic that comes before the county school board often.

An ardent video game enthusiast, Zoe Camp is involved with the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, recently landed the role of Mrs. Martini in the school's upcoming performance of "It's a Wonderful Life" and participates in speech and debate.

She wants to go to school for journalism and is considering Northwestern University, Barnard College, the University of North Carolina, Tufts University, Brown University and the University of Maryland, College Park.

According to Murphy, it will be tough to say good-bye when it comes time for Camp to head off to college.

"I feel very comfortable speaking for the whole board, that we couldn't be more pleased to have her with us," Murphy said.

"I'm only sorry that student members can only (serve) one year."

[user comments \(0\)](#)