

EAST SENIOR IS A QUICK STUDY IN ROLE ON BOARD OF EDUCATION

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(Aurora) Before his first day on the East Aurora School Board, Samory Liggins had already lobbied for comment boxes, joked with an administrator more than 10 years his senior about who was boss, and aced an interview with the head of the district.

So it was no surprise he arrived 20 minutes before his first meeting last week, all confidence and ease in black slacks and a red silk tie and handkerchief.

But, as Liggins glanced up at the gold-rimmed nameplate at the end of the long table and spotted his own moniker, the nerves started to rise.

"My heart just skipped a beat," said the usually calm East Aurora High School senior.

Of course, taking a seat among a row of middle-aged elected officials and the district superintendent would be nerve-wracking to anyone -- let alone a 17-year-old high school student.

Not that just any 17-year-old would get, or want, this gig.

As the district's newest appointed student School Board member, Liggins is now in for twice-a-month meetings that can drag long into the evenings, debates over millions of dollars in budget cuts, and fielding the gripes of his fellow East High students.

But he's no stranger to civic duty....

The teen has volunteered with Progressive Baptist Church, has served as vice president of the Boys II Men Fraternity, went door to door campaigning for the East Aurora's tax-hike referendum last spring, takes part in state Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia's student advisory council, and was one of 500 students worldwide who attended a World Affairs Seminar in Wisconsin.

And that's after he's made time to take a load of Advanced Placement, honors and college-level courses and kept his name on the honor roll.

At East High, Liggins is a member of the Student Council and Chess Club, is an ensign with the high school Naval Junior ROTC, and is an athlete on the varsity wrestling, football and track teams.

After his latest appointment, Liggins even convinced the Student Council to put up comment boxes throughout the high school and promised to check them regularly to bring pupils' concerns to the School Board meetings.

"You hear a lot of things students are unhappy with," he said. "I got tired of hearing it... Communication is really the key."

Liggins is East Aurora's third student School Board member. Each year, the chosen representative has an advisory role but not voting privileges.

He was selected after completing an essay and application, and undergoing rounds of interviews with High School Principal Sheila Conrad, Assistant Superintendent Marin Gonzalez and Superintendent Jerome Roberts.

