

## RETURN VISIT

# Exchange student now a member of Finland's parliament

By Dan Cherry  
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HUDSON — A member of Finland's Parliament made Hudson High School one of his key stops Monday at the conclusion of an international travel itinerary.

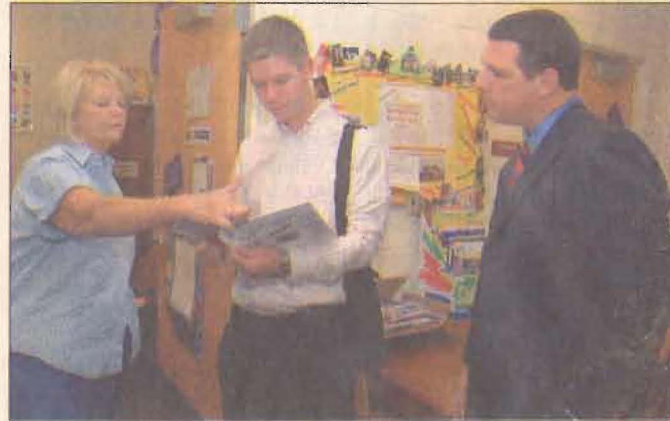
Sampsa Kataja, 36, is a member and vice chairman of the National Coalition Party of the Finnish governing body. He attended Hudson High School in 1989 as an exchange student and graduated with the class of 1990. After returning to Finland, he became an attorney before being elected to the country's Parliament in March 2007.

Kataja flew from Finland to Toronto, Canada, last week to attend a summit as part of a six-member parliamentary delegation of the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe. He was part of a

56-country effort to reconcile turmoil between the Russian and Georgian governments, participating in talks that lasted from Sept. 18-21.

After the OSCE meeting Sunday, Kataja took a train to Michigan, where he spent the evening catching up with his former host parents, David and Jan Rickard, both retired teachers from the district. He said he also took time to visit with three friends he made while attending school at Hudson.

"It seems like yesterday," Kataja said after he toured the school buildings and met those teachers he had who are still at Hudson. The memories of attending Hudson schools came back so clear, he even remembered where his locker was. While attending Hudson, Kataja was a kicker for the football team and a hurdler on the track team.



Telegram photo by Linda Campbell

**Hudson High School counselor Susie Mansfield, left, and principal Michael Osborne, right, discuss the school's curriculum with Sampsa Kataja of Finland, a foreign exchange student to Hudson in 1989-90 at the school on Monday.**

Kataja, high/middle school principal Michael Osborne and superintendent Kathy Malnar spent time Monday morning comparing education between Finnish schools and Hudson Area Schools and informally talking about Kataja's days as a Hudson Tiger. His position on Finland's parliamentary education and culture committee focuses on vocational and special education, two topics discussed between the Hudson administrators and the Parliament official.

From his observation of education in the United States, Kataja said he feels "the system works quite well here," and he had just a few observations on how the educational system in this country could improve.

Students in this country focus on learning and skills-building, often with one or two classes across one or two semesters. Students in Finland attend school for

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