

KIERA TOOLE SOPHOMORE SECRETARY

List any previous leadership positions or experiences

- I was chosen to be a Summer STEM mentor before the pandemic happened this year. I also have experience starting a club similar to a GSA/Human Rights Club in my middle school, and in elementary school I was a secretary for Junior Beta Club. These experiences allowed me to grow as a person all the while leading my fellow peers in accomplishing our goals.

Why do you want to be a member of Student Council? Why are you running for the position that you are running for this year?

- I would like to be a member of the Student Council because I believe it is part of what makes GSMST culture so welcoming. When I first came here, the student council made sure to make our environment accepting, which is one of the reasons why I came to love this school. Now that I'm a sophomore, I would love to be able to bring about the same positivity, love, and acceptance that surrounded me last year, and create an environment of change and empathy here at GSMST. I also am choosing to run for the Vice President of my class because I was not, unfortunately, a part of the Student Council last year, so I believe it would be unwise of me to apply for such a position, whereas I still want to make a lasting impact. I am especially good at keeping track of things and staying organized, and have a very good work ethic. Therefore, Secretary appears to be the perfect position.

From your perspective, what is the role of the Student Council at GSMST and in our community at large?

- I believe the Student Council here plays an enormous role in representing our school and what we stand for; we are the role models. Therefore, if we stand for positivity, the rest of the school would be encouraged to as well. It is the Student Council's job to make sure all voices are getting

heard and to show the respect and integrity that GSMST stands for. GSMST is the highest academically ranked school in Georgia, so the Student Council should work to create the best environment as well.

List up to three qualities would you use to describe an effective leader. What leadership skill(s) is your strength? How will you use that skill(s) to benefit Student Council and GSMST?

- I am passionate, determined, and I have a great work ethic. My strength is definitely in my passion and determination, which go hand and hand. When I'm passionate about something, I become determined to take whatever actions I feel are needed. And I almost always end up accomplishing what I mean to. For example, I spoke at the Gwinnett School Board Meeting a few weeks ago along with some other students, because I believe creating racial equity in schools is extremely important. By also having a great work ethic, I am always able to accomplish my work on time, which can translate to creating good work ethics within the student council and other events, and being a role model for my fellow peers.

What would you most like to improve about your own leadership skills to become a better leader?

- I would like to, and am actively working on improving my patience skills. I have always been a bit impatient, either when it comes to my own accomplishments or others'. However, I have learned that in order to get things done, one also needs to acknowledge that some things also take time. Patience is a key skill in being a leader, and is often associated with security and trust, which are two things that the student body needs to feel in order for me to lead in the best manner I can. Therefore, improving my patience is a very important skill that I try my best to focus on every day.

Describe an activity for a new event that Student Council could host.

- A "Picnic in the Park," so to speak. I know that we have dances and skate nights, however I think that also creating an event at a park would not only encourage people to get together and increase school spirit, but it would also encourage students to get outside and take a break from their work. There could be possible food trucks, or they could bring their own food, and it would just be a time to relax and enjoy each other's company.

How can Student Council improve its communication with the student body?

- As of our current situation, it's hard to improve communication in any way other than being more active on social media. However, I believe that social media itself is one of the best ways to

communicate with the student body, since our generation is frankly more comfortable with it than in person. This can encourage more people to learn what is going on and ask any questions they might have without feeling ashamed or embarrassed in person.

What do you think is the single greatest challenge facing our GSMST community and how can Student Council help to resolve this challenge?

- I believe that the greatest challenge facing our community here at GSMST is the pressure students put on themselves and each other. The pressure to make good grades, have the highest scores, and be the busiest is significantly harming the environment. Although a competitive culture is good to a point, it can also be deteriorating on the students' mental health. Therefore, I believe the Student Council could help by hosting events that encourage self-empowerment, ways to stop comparing yourself, and coping mechanisms for when students are overworked. When midterms and finals start to creep around the corner, they could host after school study and get together sessions in order to lessen the tension and stress within the air. Just simple things like that, which spread positivity and acceptance, could probably drastically improve the community here at GSMST.