

Please state what experience and/or academic training that you have had that will be beneficial as a member of the Vestavia Hills Board of Education.

Through my experience serving on boards, such as the Brother Bryan Mission board, and committees, such as the VHCS long-range strategic planning committee, I have learned the art of negotiation. Whether it is engaging in a debate regarding employee compensation or working with the technology professionals at the board of education to fine-tune the technology policy, I communicate professionally to achieve a result that will provide the maximum benefit and meet goals. **“She is an excellent team player...During disagreements on a particular topic, Kimberly is professional, even-tempered and cheerful.”** [Charles Vianey; Troop 76 committee chairman (past); managing principal, Mainline Information Systems] **“She is a true bridge-builder and problem-solver.”** [Lyle Larson; chairman, Vestavia Hills Planning and Zoning Commission; partner, Balch & Bingham, LLP]

My profession, as a business systems analyst and systems engineer, taught me to ask questions until I understood my clients’ concerns and goals. This is a major part of a board member’s job—to listen to and understand the concerns of the people he or she serves. My ability to explore all angles of a problem to find the best-fit solution and to organize information to understand all the options helps me make effective decisions. My interactions with customers taught me how to resolve differences and create, through negotiation and compromise, solutions that were practical and still met the client’s most important needs. **“While it may be tempting to select a candidate to solve a particular problem or meet a particular need, I encourage each of you to stop and appreciate the value of selecting Mrs. Cook, as she will be able to make sound recommendations and decisions in any situation.”** [Dick Toya; board member, Brother Bryan Mission Board; principal, ULTRA Consulting Group; graduate research and instructor, UAB Medical School Tissue Transplantation and Pathology]

Besides my work experience, I have been fortunate to spend a number of years as a stay-at-home parent, volunteering in a number of roles in the PTOs at four Vestavia Hills City schools. This past year, I have volunteered at Booker T. Washington Elementary School, in Titusville, which has given me a broader context. Working with people from various communities within Vestavia Hills, from all parts of our city, has given me a unique perspective and has allowed me to make many valuable connections with members of the community. I have assisted with fundraising, communications and even designed an online registration system for Liberty Park Middle School, long before the school system had the means to provide online registration. Because of my involvement in the schools, I saw the need for providing improved communications between the schools and parents. During my tenure as communications chairman for two Vestavia schools, I coordinated an email system to allow the PTO to communicate effectively with parents, and assisted the high school in maintaining their email contact information. I piloted the LPMS *Lancer Link* and produced an expanded format for the VHHS *Link* newsletter to include more information for parents about school activities than had been previously provided. Engaging the community in our schools, for the purpose of increasing student achievement, has been a theme of my volunteer involvement.

My experience serving on other boards as Board Treasurer (Grace House), Board Secretary (Brother Bryan Mission), Vulcan District Committee Membership Chair, and in multiple positions on several PTO boards has given me valuable insight into board administration--overseeing budgets and dealing with crises. It has taught me how to create consensus and engage in meaningful discussions to make the best decisions possible for the organization. **“She also possesses a keen eye for detail and a demonstrated ability to understand and assist with budgets and financial reports.”** [Jeff Windham; vice-president (past), Brother Bryan Mission Board; president and CEO, Hamm Holdings, Inc.]

Because of my strong interest in and support for public education, I have informed myself about school budgets, curriculum methods, data assessments, course of study standards, and use of technology in the schools, by meeting with board employees, asking questions and doing my own research. My suggestions to our superintendent and board of education members have led to some positive changes in governance in the areas of technology, board transparency and communications in our own school system. I attend board meetings and spend hours watching board video recordings to keep myself informed about current issues. I keep abreast of education issues and do my own research to reach data-supported conclusions. I also monitor actions by the state department of education and our legislature that affect our local school system. My passion is to understand issues so I can promote ideas that will make our school system stronger. Even with my involvement in other organizations (Boy Scouts, church, community service), I take the time to be informed in matters of education because I believe in the importance of public schools and want to do what I can to make them stronger. **“I know that, if appointed, Kimberly Cook will do everything she can to ensure that my children’s education is even better than the one I received.”** [Todd Lowther; graduate, Vestavia Hills High School; member, Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce; member, Leadership Vestavia Hills; partner, Balch & Bingham, LLP]

Please state the reason you would like to serve on the Vestavia Hills Board of Education.

I want to serve on the Vestavia Hills Board of Education to help increase student achievement for every student in our school system, regardless of demographic group, ability or interests. If selected, I will make every board decision with this overriding goal in mind. As a knowledgeable and engaged member of the community, I will work with the board and superintendent to fashion policies and make decisions that will ultimately benefit students. I have the time and connections to actively and thoughtfully assist the superintendent and board of education in meeting our system's long-range goals, especially the goal of promoting reciprocal relationships within the community. I would like to be part of continuing the advances we have made in promoting transparency and engaging the community. **"Mrs. Cook will work to create that shared vision for work and learning—build[ing] strategic partnerships."** [Kelly Garner, Vestavia Hills resident]

Finally, I want to serve because I am blessed to have the time and interest to make a difference. As the current board members will tell you, serving on the board of education is a demanding and often thankless job. The time required to perform due diligence on issues is a gift, because my husband's support allows me the luxury of time to spend on volunteer and community efforts. While I miss working at my profession as a systems engineer, I am blessed to have the ability to invest in our schools as a volunteer. My experience serving in multiple facets of our system--working with parents in four different schools, serving in multiple jobs through the PTO and school board, and having three children who have either graduated from or are now attending VHCS schools--is an advantage. "Her work was always accomplished with the purpose of serving and supporting the school and the community. **Kimberly had and continues to have the passion AND the skill to make a difference.**" [Joan Ragsdale Copeland, CEO MedManagement, LLC; president, Liberty Park Middle School PTO (past)]