

**George C. Marshall PTSA Meeting Minutes**  
**October 21, 2020**

Members Present: Carolyn Keehan (President), Althea Benjamin (VP), Maria Robles (Treasurer), Elizabeth Keegan (Secretary), Jeff Litz (Principal) -- via Zoom

1. Guest Speakers: Debbie Rosen and Lindsay Thoms from The Study Pro spoke about “Making Distance Learning Work & What Makes it So Hard.” Their organization focuses on executive function (the self-management system of the brain), which helps students in setting a goal and achieving it. Executive function (EF) is maturational and sometimes doesn’t fully develop until the 20s. What makes distance learning hard is managing time, getting started, knowing what to do, moving on when you get stuck, doing it all alone, and paying attention all day. There are 8 keys to EF; inhibition, initiation, shifting, emotional control, working memory, planning & organization, materials organization, & self-monitoring.
  - A. Inhibition – the ability to resist temptations is harder at home, and it’s exhausting being asked to do it all day.
  - B. Initiation – also harder at home because you do not have the social cues, routines, and schedules as at school.

How Can I Help My Student Get Started? Identify what the barriers are to getting started. It is important to create a “start routine” to help get going each day. Be an ally/partner in problem-solving, not a critic. Create a routine for homework, change location after school, put phone away. Chunk work into bite-sized achievable tasks is the best way to get started. Ask your student, “What are you looking forward to today when your work is done?” The speakers recommended a TED talk called “Inside the Mind of a Procrastinator” that may be helpful.

How Can I Help My Student Get Organized? Organize your virtual life, create folders, categorize Google docs, bookmark sites, delete emails. Recommend having one day a week as a “reset day” to clean out and organize digital documents.

How Can I Help My Student More Easily Track What They Have to Do? Use a planner. (A running list of assignments is not a plan – it’s overwhelming.) Consolidate due dates in one place. Pick which one to get done. Elements of a plan include due date, requirements (what is required to do the assignment) , directions (how it needs to be done), strategies (what worked last time), steps (how to make it manageable). This is an important skill to have for college. Be specific when planning. (Download their planning form at [www.thestudypro.com/remote-coached-homework-center/](http://www.thestudypro.com/remote-coached-homework-center/)).

How Can I Help My Student to Pay Attention? Set aside a specific amount of time for a task, take breaks, move (take walks, fidget), eliminate distractions. And remember, learning is a skill and skills are built, not born.

2. President's Report: Minutes from the September meeting were approved. They are posted on the PTSA website. The winner of the GCM sweatshirt from the membership drive is freshman Sam Lukas. PTSA membership is down this year. Carolyn encouraged those who have not yet joined to please do so. Last month's parent survey showed that they are interested in mental health topics, technology, and parenting. We will have a speaker at next month's meeting to discuss mental health. The PTSA continues to offer opportunities for SAT/Act test prep.
3. Budget: Marie explained the challenges in creating a PTSA budget this year, given the uncertainties of the pandemic and whether previous events/activities will occur. Revenue is particularly difficult to estimate this year. The budget was approved and is posted on the PTSA website.
4. Principal's Report: Mr. Litz explained that there are 4 phases for the FCPS return to school plan – we are in Phase 2 now. Phase 3 will be having students come back 2 days per week as some families chose back in the summer. Last week small cohorts of cosmetology students began returning to the building, in two three-hour shifts. Second-level academy classes will begin next week, followed by ESOL and some special needs students. Following the last school board work session, the plan is to start phasing younger students in beginning in mid-November. High school students are slated to return February 1. All of this depends on the local health metrics. Virginia Health Department released its pandemic metrics for return to school on its website ([www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/schools-workplaces-community-locations/k-12-education/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/schools-workplaces-community-locations/k-12-education/)). The PSAT will be held on 10/29 for juniors; all other students will be asynchronous that day. 10/30 is the last day of the quarter and a two-hour early release. 11/2 and 11/3 are student holidays. Seniors came two weeks ago for a drive through ice cream "social." Marshall hopes to do more of those types of events. Mr. Litz and Cindy Blakeley asked parents at the meeting to provide feedback about students' workloads (especially having a lot of assignments due on Mondays) and use of laptop cameras in class. Some parents felt that too much work was due on Mondays and were in favor of requiring the cameras be turned on. Mr. Litz said across the county, grades are down significantly so far this year. He said that he and his staff are continuously working to not overwhelm students and welcome student and parental feedback. In other news, FCPS will be installing cameras in the gyms, auditorium and on the football field to livestream events should they happen this year. The senior class has requested a town hall with Mr. Litz.
5. Committee Reports:
  - A. Academic Letters- Academic letters will be distributed on 10/26 to juniors and seniors who earned a 3.7 GPA the previous year. 511 students will be honored this year.
  - B. Senior Class – Julie Heiden reported that the seniors completed The Lemon Toss Challenge video. Senior class parents are trying to do an activity with the class on the 21<sup>st</sup> of each month. If anyone has a creative idea for ANGC, in the event it cannot be held indoors, please contact Julie.

- C. Hospitality – Tara Henigan said that Hospitality has been providing treat bags for the teachers and staff working at the school and they have been very appreciative.

PTSA Meeting Dates: Nov 18, Jan 20, Feb 17, Mar 17, April 21, May 19