

# Poolesville High School PTSA Meeting Minutes

**Date:** September 16, 2025

**Location:** Zoom

**Recorded by:** AI, Formatted by Cindy Wang

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by PTSA leadership via Zoom on September 16, 2025. The agenda included updates on school operations, construction progress, grading policies, PTSA leadership planning, budget approval, and a presentation on college application writing strategies.

## 2. Leadership Updates and Announcements

### President's Report – Cheryl Booth (First Vice President):

- Shared upcoming events including **Poolesville Day** and the ongoing **boundary study**, which will reopen for public comment in the fall.
- Encouraged continued PTSA membership and participation in the **Givebacks program** to support school initiatives.

### Principal's Report – Daniel McKenna (Acting Principal):

- Reported a positive start to the 2025–2026 school year, with reduced hallway disruptions and high participation in **Spirit Week**.
- Announced upcoming events:
  - **Financial Aid Webinar:** September 24
  - **Homecoming Week:** September 29–October 4
  - **PSAT:** October 15 — Sophomores are automatically registered; juniors must register by October 14.
- Reviewed the new **mobile device policy**, stating personal phones may not be visible or used during instructional time.
- Encouraged parents and students to stay informed through official school communications.

### 3. Construction and Facilities Update – Chris [Last Name]

- Reported that the **gymnasium and professional development spaces** have been completed and turned over for use.
- The **cafeteria, media center, and outdoor areas** are scheduled for completion by **Halloween**.
- The **practice fields and remaining parking areas** are expected to be finished by **December 2025**.

### 4. Grading and Reporting Policy Update – Daniel McKenna

- Reviewed MCPS's new **grading and reporting policies**, which include:
  - A **10-day turnaround** for assignment feedback.
  - **Restrictions on late submissions**.
  - A **revised grade calculation formula** that makes achieving an "A" more rigorous.
- Addressed questions regarding how these changes could impact MCPS students' competitiveness. Mr. McKenna confirmed that colleges will be officially informed of the policy adjustments to ensure fair evaluation of transcripts.

### 5. PTSA Budget and Leadership Planning

#### Budget Report – Anne [Last Name]:

- Presented the proposed **2025–2026 budget**:
  - **Planned Expenditures:** \$8,000 for programs and objectives; \$11,000 for post-prom.
  - **Projected Revenue:** \$5,000 in membership dues and \$3,000 from fundraising initiatives.
- The budget was **approved unanimously** by attending members.

#### Open Leadership Positions:

The PTSA continues to seek volunteers for the following roles:

- PTSA President

- First Vice President
- Reflections Chair
- Staff Appreciation Coordinator
- Membership Coordinator

## 6. College Application and Essay Writing Presentation – Amy Smith

**Topic:** *College Application Process and Essay Writing Strategies*

Amy Smith presented a comprehensive workshop for parents and students on building strong college applications and writing authentic essays.

### Highlights:

- Admissions officers typically spend **7–12 minutes** per application.
- Over **4,000 colleges** exist nationwide, with **1,000+ using the Common App**.
- Application numbers are increasing, and more schools are reinstating **test score requirements**.

### Essay Writing Key Points:

- Focus on the student’s authentic “**wow factor**.”
- Avoid AI tools and excessive parental editing; maintain a genuine student voice.
- “**Show, don’t tell**” — use specific examples to demonstrate character and experience.
- Keep language natural; avoid overly complex or “\$5 words.”
- Begin early, proofread carefully, and tailor essays to the audience.
- Avoid sharing essays with too many reviewers to prevent “analysis paralysis.”

### Common App Overview:

- Amy reviewed the **five Common App essay prompts** for the Class of 2026.
- Noted that some schools (e.g., **Virginia Tech**) do not require essays, while others (e.g., **UMD, University of Michigan**) may require multiple supplemental essays.
- Emphasized that colleges prioritize authenticity, personal growth, and storytelling over perfection.

**Parent and Student Guidance:**

- Seniors should plan for key deadlines on **November 1** and **December 1**.
- Parents should support students but refrain from contacting colleges or writing essays on their behalf.
- Underclassmen (grades 9–11) are encouraged to focus on academics, extracurricular involvement, and personal development.

**Additional Application Tips:**

- Reuse supplemental essays strategically.
- Use the “Additional Information” section to address unique circumstances or challenges.
- Choose majors based on genuine interests rather than perceived admissions advantages.

**Conclusion:**

Amy concluded the session by sharing examples of successful essays and encouraged students to take ownership of their application process. Attendees were informed that **SSL hours** could be earned for participation, with Poolesville staff providing instructions on obtaining forms.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting concluded following Amy Smith’s presentation. Members were thanked for their participation and encouraged to attend the next PTSA meeting.