

GEORGE *Washington*



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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PTA Parent Teacher Association

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the PTA? The PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is a national volunteer based organization whose primary concern is the well being of all children and youth. The GWES PTA is a local unit of the National and TN State PTA and is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Who is the PTA? The National PTA comprises nearly 6 million parents and other concerned adults devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of parental involvement in schools. Members of the GWES PTA include dedicated parent volunteers, teachers, and administrators. All families are encouraged and welcome to join the GWES PTA.

What exactly does the GWES PTA do? The mission statement of the GWES PTA is that we are a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child. The GWES PTA collaborates with the principal, teachers, and school staff to ensure that we are working together toward common goals including the promotion of quality education, parental involvement, and the health and well being of every student. We sponsor numerous programs to help achieve these goals including: Back to School Night; a student directory for every family who chooses to participate; t-shirts for every student with the logo of the school's theme for that year printed on it; hospitality for teacher/staff appreciation; the Gift of Reading program (twice a year every student receives a free book of their choice that is appropriate for their reading level); Learning Center year-end celebrations; transportation for the annual fifth grade Mountain Trail field trip; Field Day; blue bags; monthly newsletter to keep our parents informed; funds to support our Related Arts programs; and much more.

Where does the PTA get the funds to sponsor all of these programs? The PTA raises funds to bridge the gap between what our students need and what the school budget can provide. We receive most of our funds through generous contributions from families like yours. These funds are raised throughout the year with special fundraising events including Membership and GWES Sponsor Drives, donations from Business Sponsors, our two annual fundraising events: the Run/Walk-a-Thon and Read-a-Thon, and Spirit Nights. Each year the GWES PTA executive board creates a proposed budget for the school year which must be voted on and approved by general PTA members. All members are eligible and encouraged to vote.

Why should I join the PTA? The number one reason to join the PTA is to *benefit your child*. The ability of the PTA to implement all of the school activities and programs that it sponsors is dependent on members volunteering their time, resources, and ideas. Volunteer hours, which are donated by parents like you, are crucial to the success of the PTA.

I do not have time to volunteer, should I still join? YES! Joining the GWES PTA will not commit you to long hours of volunteering. For you, joining may simply be a statement that you support what the PTA does here at GWES on behalf of all the students. Keep in mind however, that there are opportunities to volunteer with the PTA that do not require your

presence at school, like joining the hospitality committee and providing muffins for a teacher appreciation day. Your level of involvement is completely up to you.

How do I join? On Back to School Night you will see a table set up with one of our committee members to help you join PTA and answer any questions. Early in fall semester, your child may also bring home a PTA membership envelope that you can fill out and send back with your child along with your payment. The cost to join the GWES PTA is \$5.00. Please note that of that \$5.00, the GWES only keeps \$1.25. The remaining \$3.75 is sent to our state PTA (TNPTA) and national PTA organizations for operational and administrative costs, the liability insurance for our PTA sponsored events, and state classification fees for our 501(c)(3) standing as a non-profit organization. That is why we encourage all parents to not only join the GWES PTA, but to become a GWES Sponsor. GWES Sponsors are parents and others who have elected to make an additional donation above the required \$5.00 joining fee. The extra funds that you contribute to the school by becoming a GWES Sponsor helps to afford programs, equipment, and materials that enhance the experience and quality of education your child receives at George Washington Elementary. There are various levels of GWES Sponsors available. These levels are listed on the membership envelope that you will receive at Back To School Night, or that will be sent home with your child in early fall. Each GWES Sponsor is recognized by being listed in every monthly digital issue of the GWES PTA newsletter.

How will I stay informed about current PTA news? The PTA has a monthly newsletter that is delivered in two ways: a paper version sent home with every student and an electronic version emailed to all parents who have provided an email address to the school to be used for communication purposes. In addition, all parents are *strongly* encouraged to register with Planet K8, a free online program that brings together all of the learning center news, related arts information, PTA news and activities, information from the principal and main office, and more. Lastly, the PTA holds general membership meetings throughout the school year that all are welcome and encouraged to attend.

What is Planet K8? Why should I register? How do I register? PlanetK8 is a free online program used by teachers, principals, and school staff to communicate with parents concerning school-based activities using modern media in a school-wide community. Simply stated, PlanetK8 connects school communities online. By registering with Planet K8 you will stay up to date with schedules, events, news from your child's teacher and/or learning center, important messages from the principal and main office, information about the related arts programs, news from the GWES PTA, and more. You can even set up to receive event notifications via email or text messages to keep you in the loop. It is easy and *free* to join. Simply go to planetk8.com and click on the green "join now" icon on the top left hand corner of the page and follow the instructions. If you have any difficulty, you may contact the support staff at 1-888-668-7452 Ext. 0 or support@PlanetHS.com.

I am a PTA member and would like to be more involved; how do I sign up? At the beginning of the academic year you will receive a manila envelope at Back to School Night from your child's teacher (if you are unable to attend Back to School Night, this manila envelope will be sent home with your child within the first few days of school). In that envelope is a green form listing various volunteer opportunities you may sign up for. If you would like to be involved in any of those activities, you may fill out the form and send it back to school with your child. If you do not receive a manila envelope or misplace your green volunteer form, you may leave your contact information with the front office staff and ask that you be contacted by the PTA about volunteer opportunities.

I have more questions, who may I contact? The current PTA president for 2015-16, Lindsey Philpott, will gladly speak with anyone needing more information. You may contact her by email at lnphilpott@gmail.com.