



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • December 20, 2018

A. In Attendance

It was noted that (a) parents and other “persons in a parental relation” as defined by the regulations of the New York City Chancellor and designated persons having a relationship to a child or children currently attending Q300 (the “**Parents**”) and (b) eligible Q300 teachers and instructional staff members who are currently employed on a full-time basis (the “**Staff**”) at Q300 were present. The total number of Parents and Staff (together, the “**Members**”) present was 22.

B. Call to Order

Co-Presidents Julissa McHugh and Paula Marisi called the the General Membership of the Q300 PTA Association to order at 6:40 pm in the auditorium at the lower division campus at 28-37 29th Street, Astoria, NY 11102.

C. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the General Meeting held on October 26, 2019 were presented. A motion was made to approve such minutes the Secretaries were authorized to fill in the number of attendees to be filled in later. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members approved the minutes.

D. Co-Presidents’ Report

Co-Presidents Julissa McHugh and Paula Marisi gave the President’s report. The following are the highlights:

1. Q300 hosted its second annual hackathon using the Games for Change Student Challenge platform on Dec. 4 from 9:30am-4:30pm at the Upper Division. Thanks to parents Margarita Soto and Lynn Kennedy for organizing.
2. The PTA and PS 17 PTA organized a screening of the movie, “Trolls” on Dec 7th at 5:30 pm at the Lower Division campus. Over 100 people attended and the event raised \$300. Thanks to parent Lynn Kennedy for organizing.
3. Thanks very much for all who donated to the voluntary holiday group collection. The funds, which totaled about USD \$9,000 were distributed (via gift cards) among all the classroom teachers, specials teachers, administration, school aides, security guards, and main custodians at the holiday breakfast earlier today. Special thanks to parent Sue Sekar for organizing the collection and to her fourth grade daughter Annika, who hand-wrote the thank you cards to Q300 staffers.
4. The PTA is planning its annual International Potluck, which will again take place in January (pending school confirmation of permit). The PTA will be holding a small silent auction and raffle in coordination with the event.
5. The PTA is seeking a venue for its Stepping into Summer Dance and Auction Party.
6. Thanks to those who donated to the coat, sock, and pajama book drives. Special thanks to Gina Reis and Lynn Kennedy for organizing.
7. Thank to members of the One School Committee who met with Lawrence Pendergast, executive superintendent for Queens North to discuss the possibility of housing the lower (K-4) and upper (5-8) divisions in one building. The Committee noted the logistical challenges of having Q300 housed in two buildings: (a) doubled administrative costs, loss of teaching time-due to traveling between the schools, mismatched school schedules; etc.; and (b) Q300 currently has challenges for building a cohesive community across divisions. Mr. Pendergast expressed interest in how the one building plan would benefit the school district as a whole. The Committee noted that by moving the lower and upper divisions to one building, the space that they would open up space for the district in lower and upper division campuses.

8. Thanks to Kevin Gallagher for organizing the gift card fundraiser, in which families have the opportunity to purchase gift cards – a percentage of such sales is donated to the PTA.
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E. Co-Treasurers' Report

Lower Division Co-VP Sue Sekar delivered the Co-Treasurer's Report. Attached is a copy of summary of the PTA's finances for November 2018. In November 2018, the PTA raised \$63,345.51, which includes \$59,079.51 from the Direct Appeal. Outflows were \$6,051.13, including second grade architecture, music enrichment, and animation enrichment programs. For December 2018, the PTA paid for TA salaries through April 2019.

F. School Leadership Team ("SLT") Report

SLT member Laura Marks gave the SLT report. The following are highlights:

1. The SLT held a special meeting on December to discuss the resignation of a first-grade teacher. Principal Biniaris noted the establishment of an exit interview process for teachers leaving Q300. This will help Q300 understand why teachers leave. While teachers may not be completely forthcoming, it would be valuable to have these interviews. United Federation of Teacher ("UFT") representative Ali Lisberger and one other teacher will conduct such exit interviews -- teacher Maria Panagiotakis will likely conduct the interview for the lower division; teacher Elijah Cho will likely conduct the same for the upper division. The first grade teacher who resigned will participate in an exit interview. In response to a question, Principal Biniaris noted that while Ali is on maternity leave, upper division teacher Scott Waldman will likely serve on the exit interview team.
 2. At the SLT's regular meeting on December 17, 2018, the SLT revised sections of the Comprehensive Education Plan ("CEP"). In response to a question about whether teacher morale was low given the Department of Education ("DOE") School Quality Survey results from Spring 2018, Principal Biniaris stated he had conducted a Fall 2018 teacher survey, which indicated that moral was high. He had sent the Fall survey to teachers via a google group; he acknowledged that teachers may not be forthcoming on the survey as it was coming from their supervisor.
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G. Committee Reports

1. **Fundraising.** Co-Vice President of Fundraising Claire Lui asked for volunteers to help solicit auction items from local businesses. Direct Appeals chair David Wang reported that the Direct Appeal has thus far raised USD \$171,000. Participation rate is at 31%. Thanks to all those who have donated.
2. **Communications.** Co-Vice President for Communications Matthew Schaefer noted that the PTA has two website domains – www.q300pta.org and www.q300pta.net. He noted that the .org domain immediately forwards users to the .net domain, which has updated information and is built on a wordpress platform. The PTA is considering moving all new info to the .org domain. If there are parents who are experienced in moving a wordpress site from one domain to another, please contact Matthew at communications@q300pta.org.
3. **Membership.** Co-Vice President for Membership Maria Hantzopoulos noted that the International Potluck is coming up on January 25, 2019 at the lower division campus. The PTA needs help in organizing student activities and to solicit auction item such as summer camp spots. Please help out in soliciting auction items for the Stepping into Summer event in May.
4. **Community Affairs.** Co-President Julissa McHugh gave the report. The following are highlights. Upper division students participated in the December 4, 2019 hackathon. The top participants will compete in the borough-wide hackathon. Thanks to those who helped with Movie Night (see above). For those interested in serving on the grants committee, please contact communityaffairs@q300pta.org. Community Affairs is gearing up to work on the City Council participatory budgeting and Resolution A capital project funding process. Thanks to those who donated used coats, new socks, new pajamas and book for the PTA drives. Community Affairs is interested in helping to form a Wellness Council for our school. It has begun the search for interested parents who would like to participate in planning for the council. The council can be instrumental in strengthening physical and health education programs within the school, as well as other health and wellness initiatives (e.g., Physical Activity, Food, School Environment, Community Wellness, etc.). The PTA is working with Q300 to organize service-learning projects for each grade, such as an adopt-a-park cleanup

day. Please contact Co-Vice Presidents of Community Affairs at communityaffairs@q300pta.org, if you have any leads for non-profit organizations that Q300 can partner with to coordinate these projects or if you know of anyone who can give a presentation about the service work that they do. The PTA is helping organize the first Q300 science fair at both campuses. If you know of any scientists who would like to present, please contact community affairs. The PTA will be circulating a survey to determine if there is any interest in a Q300 fun run. Further, Q300 is organizing a basketball tournament at the Upper Division. Please contact community affairs if you can volunteer as a coach or referee. Finally, the joint Q300 PTA and PS 17 PTA Zumba-thon fundraiser will be held on April 5, 2019.

5. **Lower and Upper Division Report.** Lower Division Co-Vice-President Sue Sekar and Upper Division Co-Vice President Codou Ndiour are finalizing specific grade family contact lists. They are also organizing activities for the International Potluck. Codou noted that a middle school graduation committee has been formed. Finally, fifth graders met with 8th grade buddies in a mentoring program to assist the transition of fifth graders (who are technically elementary school students) to middle school.
6. **Chess Update.** Parent Luke Lukose gave a brief update on the chess team. He noted that at a recent P.S. 6 tournament, two Q300 students won first place in his/her respective section. He encouraged Q300 students to get involved, including participating in a city-wide tournament on January 4-5, 2019, the next Q300 tournament on February 10 and in the 52nd New York State Scholastic Championships on March 9-10, 2019 in Saratoga Springs. He noted that there are all-girls tournaments as well. In response to a question, Principal Biniaris noted that winter cycle for the lower division afterschool program has begun.

H. Principal's Report

Principal Biniaris gave the Principal's Report. The following are highlights:

1. Upper division students who participated in the hack-a-thon made presentations to lower division students. He noted that the hack-a-thon presentation and the 5th-8th grade mentoring program (see above) are ways in which Q300 is trying to tie both campuses together.
2. Principal Biniaris expressed appreciation about the fifth-grade native American projects. He noted that the first grade will be on a field trip to Queensboro Community College; the second grade will be visiting the NYC Transit Museum.
3. The newly hired social worker will begin working on January 15, 2019 at the lower division.
4. The hiring committee, which consists of administrators, teachers, and parents have been interviewing potential first grade candidates and viewing demonstration classes. A parent expressed concern
5. Upper division teacher Carla Reyes will extend her maternity leave until the end of the school year. Teacher Erin Erin Tornatore will continue to cover Carla's work during the leave.
6. Reading assessments will be occurring in the lower division. Assessments are occurring in the upper division. The assessments will be sent home. The second marking period will end on January 18, 2019.
7. Lower division parents can reserve time to speak with teachers during parent engagement block on Tuesday afternoons from 2:30 pm to 3:10 pm and upper division parents can do the same from 3:10 pm to 3:50 pm.
8. Teachers will be participating in professional development programs on de-escalation, restorative circles, and responsive classroom training in February 2019.
9. The community helpers program where students volunteer to do various things such helping collect garbage and helping with recess, has been reinstated.
10. Q300 held a parent workshop on the education of English language learners ("ENL") on December 12, 2019. The workshop included ways of identifying ENL students.
11. Q300 held a parent workshop on Q300's multi-tiered positive behavior intervention program on December 11, 2019 and December 20, 2019. The program focuses on providing a comprehensive system that helps identify students who need

a greater level of service and provide data-based problem solving. Principal Biniaris agreed to provide the information to the parent community.

12. Principal Biniaris agreed to coordinate workshops with PTA meetings to increase attendance at both events.
13. Q300 held its holiday staff party earlier today at a local bowling alley. This past Monday, lower division teacher Jose Jaime, who plays in a band, brought his instruments to school and, with a fellow bandmember, played for the staff.
14. The goal of the special education committee is to work to make sure that students with an individualized educational plans (“**IEP**”) (helps ensure that a child who has a disability receives specialized instruction and related services) and with 504 plans (helps ensure that a child who has a disability receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment are fully welcomed and empowered in the school. It also seeks to consolidate resources available to students, families, and staffers.
15. In response to a question, Principal Biniaris noted that teachers should be organizing the field trips.
16. Several parents expressed concern about behavior issues in a first-grade class and a fifth-grade class. Principal Biniaris noted that staffers have been using the multi-tiered positive behavior intervention program. A parent expressed concern that there may be a disconnect between the theory of multi-tiered intervention program and what actually took place in the classroom that led to the situation that the school is dealing with now. Principal Biniaris stated that Q300 has collected a lot of data and that out of 19 classes, the school has only 2 classes that have issues. He noted that the school is accelerating interventions to help identify the students who are struggling and progressively addressing their issues. He noted that he will endeavor to keep the same substitute teacher until the appointment of a new first grade teacher. Social emotional learning coordinator Edwin Mora has been working with the first grade class. In January, Assistant Principal Anna Milonkis, who will be returning from maternity leave, and the new social worker will also be working with the first-grade class. Principal Biniaris noted that he is seeing improvements collectively and individually in the fifth grade. The number of incidents have decreased in the fifth grade.
17. The PTA committee will evaluate community feedback about the school’s music program, as well as other enrichments. For example, a fifth grade parent expressed concern that Art House Astoria has had difficulties teaching wind instrument instruction in one of the fifth grade classes.
18. Coffee with Principal Biniaris will be held on December 21, 2018 at 9:00 am at the Upper Division.
19. In response to a question, Principal Biniaris noted that differentiated instruction for reading within a class continues this year in the lower division. He noted that he is looking into having differentiated instruction for math in the lower division. He noted that there is a first grader who is doing fifth grade math.

I. Resolution

A motion was made to approve a resolution to allocate additional funds for the hiring of a teaching assistant (“**TA**”) for the fifth grade. Such TA shall have studied education, have a teacher’s certification, or have substantial educational experience. A parent stated that it was important to hire an experienced teaching assistant to help the fifth grade teachers. The teachers have noted that a TA would be helpful in the classroom. A parent noted that the fifth-grade issues are hard issues; kids all have struggles at some point and that parents need to put themselves in the shoes of the families whose kids are experiencing struggles. A motion was made to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.

H. New Business

A parent raised the possibility that the PTA general meeting be recorded and posted online. This will enable Members who are unable to attend to listen to meeting, either in real-time or at their leisure. They would however be unable to vote, as the Chancellor’s regulations require attendance for Members to vote on matters at PTA meetings. A parent expressed concern that Q300 human resources or student personal information may be disclosed in the recordings and would be easily accessible to the public. Further, Members may be reluctant to participate in a PTA meeting, if it is recorded.

J. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm. The next general membership meeting will be held on January 16, 2019 at 6:30 pm in the lower division campus.

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M. Daniel Bach and David William Wang, Co-Secretaries