



Meet Scott Q300 Technology

Scott is Q300's technology teacher, working with each K, 1, and 6th grade class three days per week for a total of two hours and fifteen minutes of technology instruction for each child each week. His classroom is bright and spacious. The front half of the room has school desks arranged in groups of four and an area rug where the younger grades congregate at the beginning and end of class. The rear half is filled with Lego robots in various stages of completion (some of which were unveiled at the Queens Lego League Robotics Qualifier Tournament on January 24th!). Like all Q300 classrooms, there is no teacher desk at the front of the room.

The computer lab has thirty Apple MacBook Air laptop computers, enough for each student to use their own. Students are assigned a specific computer (by number), and before class begins Scott has already set up each desk with a computer. Students find their computer and click on their teacher's name and icon and enter the class password which they are all expected to remember. Kindergarten and first grade students use an external mouse, the sixth graders just the track pad. Scott set up all of the computers with a streamlined desktop and is able to monitor what files students are saving along with their progress on assignments.

Scott utilizes the responsive classroom approach—each class starts with him demonstrating a lesson for the class and then spending time asking the students what they heard. Scott then asks a student to repeat through demonstration or sharing what the lesson is, coaching them in their own words and on their own terms to ensure comprehension of the concepts for the class. From there, the students go and work on the lesson at their individual computers. As they work through issues, they will utilize Scott's 'low-tech' but effective visual management tool – taped red and green plastic cups on each desk; when students put the red cup up Scott knows he is needed!

Technology is exposing Q300 students to computational thinking – concepts of sequence, loops, parallelism, events, conditionals, operators and data. The lessons are progressive, allowing students to build skills as they complete modules over several weeks. Amazingly, our students are working on programming

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Holiday Break



TOP TO BOTTOM: **James** on his way to winter camp upstate. **Hazel** doing technology homework. **Cassie** feeding a giraffe and the Santa Barbara zoo.



year of progress from their assessed reading level at the beginning of the year. Principal Willard and the teachers are working together to ensure our students are continually challenged even as they are reading well above grade levels.

Sixth Grade. Principal Willard noted that the sixth graders are being sized for violin in connection with the PTA-funded BCM program, are building water filters in engineering, are going to a class trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in connection with their class work on ancient Egypt, and are participating in the PTA-funded soccer and basketball program.

Principal Willard shared many other updates including plans underway for next year with the middle school move to the new site. He also noted that he is working with the PTA to evaluate free afterschool program for the middle school for 2015-2016 school year. He noted that Vassar College students, who have been interned at Q300 for several weeks, have been very helpful to the school. (Thanks parent Maria Hantzapoulos, who is a Vassar professor for arranging!) He also noted that he has been interviewing potential applicants for the PTA-funded teaching assistants.

Also during the January meeting, attendees heard updates from the School Leadership Team and Communications, Enrichment (including details about a new chess program), and Membership Committees. The Fundraising committee discussed their thoughts on a spring auction, a book sale during parent-teacher conferences on March 19th, and a sale of the Q300 uniform in June (as our students outgrow their uniforms).

The PTA will be uploading past PTA meeting minutes to its website shortly.

The remaining PTA meetings are as follows: **February 26th, March 26th, April 16th, May 21st, and June 18th. All begin at 6:30 pm and typically last 60 – 90 minutes.** We look forward to seeing you at one soon. In the meantime, please share your questions, comments, concerns, and ideas for PTA meetings with PTA President David Wang at president@q300pta.org. We are eager to get your ideas about what would bring you to a PTA meeting. ☺

PTA Update

What happens at a PTA Meeting anyway?

Q300 PTA monthly meetings are a great forum to get the latest updates about the school and to meet with other Q300 parents and teachers, and Principal Willard. Members are encouraged to ask questions and raise issues throughout the meeting.

During the January meeting, a representative of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music (BCM) gave an overview of the upcoming kindergarten and first grade music program, which will consist of two five-week courses to explore rhythm and music improvisation by incorporating

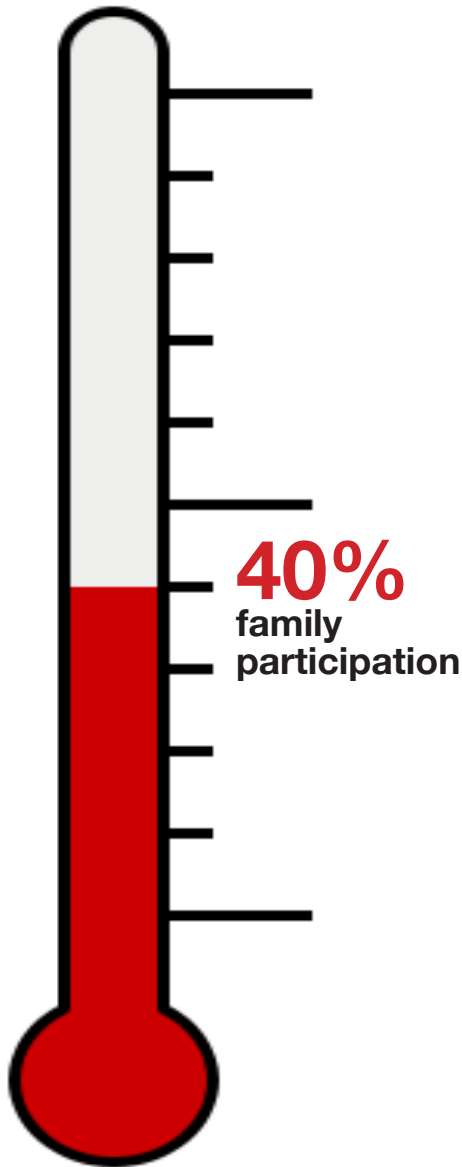
Principal Willard gave an update . . . 92% of kindergarteners and 95% of first graders are at or above reading level. 94% of kindergarteners have made a half year of progress from the beginning of the year, and 60% have made a full year's progress.

instrumental and body percussion with songs. The presenter provided insights into what the students will be doing and why, and answered parent questions. The program will begin at the end of February. She noted that the sixth graders' fifteen-week violin program begins on January 21st. Sixth graders will learn fundamentals, work on rhythm and note reading skills, and develop a

sense of intonation, tone control and ensemble.

Also at the January meeting, Principal Willard shared an update about Q300 academics including the following:

Kindergarten and First Grade. Principal Willard gave an update on Q300's targeted reading program. To date, 92% of kindergarteners and 95% of first graders are at or above reading level. Specifically, 94% of kindergarteners have made a half year of progress from their assessed reading level at the beginning of the year, and 60% have made a full year's progress. 50% of first graders have made a half



Fundraising Update


Thank you for your contributions to the Q300 PTA Direct Appeal. To date, over 40% of families have made donations. Our goal is 100% participation—please take a moment to contribute if you have not already. Thanks to the generous donations to date, the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music Partners Program and the Kiskeya Sports Program begin this semester, and Principal Willard is interviewing potential certified teaching assistants for the lower grades. There is a lot more to do for the school—and we need your donation! Contribution forms can be obtained from <http://www.q300pta.org/donations/direct-appeal/>. For more information please contact fundraising@q300pta.org.

Meet Scott continued

concepts they may just be learning— what is right and left, angles, shapes, and more. You may not know what a nonagon is, but there are many Q300 students who can program the computer to draw one!

In addition to his technology classes, Scott co-teaches engineering to the sixth graders. The curriculum is hands-on; the class just finished a unit on water filters in which they addressed the real-world issue of water pollution by building and testing their own water filters. Working with three different pollutants, the students had access to a variety of materials—screens, cotton balls, cheesecloth, etc. — and worked in teams to explore different possibilities of filters. They formed hypotheses and tested them, and were evaluated on several dimensions including how clear the water was, how long it took to filter the water and how much the materials cost. Next up: oil slicks!

Scott also teaches a reading group with mostly first graders, is responsible for test coordination, stewards the school website (check out his handiwork at www.q300.org!), and takes care of all technology and data concerns. The school is equipped with a secure wi-fi connection, and students and teachers are able to go online from all parts of the fourth floor and work individually or in groups as an assignment requires. Every teacher has an Apple laptop and an Elmo projector which displays images of hard documents on the wall, including any notes the teachers might write.

Scott and his family are long-time Astoria residents, and his daughter is in seventh-grade at a nearby school. After receiving his Master's degree from NYIT, he has spent the last fifteen years of his career in the technology education field, first as a tech staff developer supporting NYC teachers learning and using technology in their classrooms and then as a teacher himself for a New York City junior high school. Scott's passion for technology began when he got his first PC twenty years ago and started learning how to make websites, graphics and games and he is excited to share it with Q300 students every day. Scott celebrates the spirit and independence of children and loves to see their confidence grow as they master new concepts, whether it is learning how to log-in to the computer or save and retrieve documents for the K and 1 classes (which are currently utilizing MicroWorlds Jr.), or robotics and Scratch programming for sixth graders. He is always available to talk to parents about your questions and concerns, his preferred method of contact is —you guessed it! — email: scott@q300.org 





In-School Volunteer Program

The Q300 parent volunteer program kicked off on December 15th and to date a total of 14 parents have volunteered for nearly 50 shifts to help Q300 teachers supervise the students during breakfast and recess/lunch.

School social worker Jill Kaufman is in charge of breakfast, which students trickling in—the sixth graders usually arrive earlier and most of K and 1 a bit later. Students are assigned a table based on their grade and class; some get breakfast but most just sit and talk. When the time comes (there are no bells that ring), sixth graders head up to

Jill tells us that “it’s been very helpful to work with parents at breakfast to make sure that our students begin the day feeling that their presence is important and that they are cared for. The dialogue that we have with students at breakfast creates trust and connection.

the fourth floor on their own and K and 1 line up and head up in a big parade. A different letter is selected each day—the child whose name starts with that letter gets to be the line leader. Jill tells us that “it’s been very helpful to work with parents at breakfast to make sure that our students begin the day feeling that their presence is important and that they are

cared for. The dialogue that we have with students at breakfast creates trust and connection. It also reminds us about our community norms and values. Including family members feels like community building is expanding. It’s also nice to have someone to help make sure that all

hats, scarves and gloves make it up the stairs.”

K1 parent Ingrid has been a breakfast volunteer and says: “What I’ve liked the most is meeting the kids at school and getting to know the people that my daughter spends the majority of her day with, the ones that she talks about all the time. It’s nice to see how comfortable the kids feel at the school, and how much they have connected with each other and with the staff. I can see how much they love Jill—they want to tell her all about their weekends.”

Lunch typically starts with a half hour of recess from 10:30 am to 11:00 am, weather permitting. The sixth graders head to the playground on the 30th Avenue side of the school and the younger students stay in the internal playground where two of the classrooms (one each of K and 1) are assigned to the “gray” area, which is an open asphalt space; the other two classrooms are assigned to the “black” area which is mostly covered with black rubber and has a play structure. The classes switch each day. Staff and parent volunteers monitor safety concerns, answer questions, resolve disputes. There is constant motion—kids are talking, playing, but most of all moving!

Just before 11 o’clock strikes, staff and parents round up kids into lines by class to file into the cafeteria. Q300 kids sit at picnic tables by class, taking up about one third of the cafeteria space in total. Those students that brought their lunch will start eating as those students getting a school lunch will be sent to the lunch line one row at a time (with Principal Matt Willard typically acting as traffic controller). For those that are getting school lunch, they walk through the lunch line, picking up trays with a main dish and sides along with chocolate or ‘regular’ milk (as the kids call it). All students have access to unlimited water and milk and one of the main volunteer responsibilities is bringing milk to the table upon request and opening the cartons. First grade parent Alketa has volunteered during the lunch shift and says “Volunteering for me is a way of being closer to my son and his classmates. I enjoy observing him interacting with his peers. This is my second year volunteering at my son’s schools. I would recommend it to other parents that have the possibility, because not only you can observe your children at the school environment and how they interact with their peers, but it is a big help for the staff also.”

Q300 students request help at lunch by raising their hands, and parent volunteers and school staff will come to assist. It might be a request for a fork or extra ketchup, or to help open something brought from home. Occasionally, stu-

dents will need help resolving differences, finding hats and gloves, or someone will just want to tell you something they are excited about. There is also the business of handing out bathroom passes, one each for the girls and the boys. At the end of lunch, trash cans are brought by each table and all take-home containers are packed. A couple of students get selected for milk duty, a highly sought after position by kindergarteners and first graders. It involves taking all milk cartons from the tables and emptying the leftover milk into a silver pail at the front of the cafeteria. One parent volunteer learned from Matt exactly why Q300 does this . . . can you guess? And no, it is not to recycle the milk for re-use.

The volunteer schedule is managed using Signup Genius where parents can sign up for sessions that meet their schedule. The school requests that parents sign up for a minimum of one month at a time for your chosen day/time slot. For example, sign up for recess/lunch on Mondays for the month of Feb. Volunteers must

be parents or guardians of Q300 students. K2 parent Catherine sums up her experience: "Volunteering has been so fun and easy. The kids are so sweet and funny. It has also been great to meet all the kids, not just [my child's] friends. The staff has been very welcoming and appreciative every time I have gone in. If I could, I'd do it every week." K1 parent Eva agrees that "It's great to see what his day is like, and to get to know the other kids. I like helping the staff, and being more connected to the school."

In addition to the organized breakfast and lunch shifts, there have been other volunteers in the school, including a parent working with Model UN, parent volunteers who have helped with the 1st grade Math day and publishing party, parents who volunteered to host the Holiday Appreciation Breakfast, and even one kindergarten parent who has taught music appreciation. Please reach out to your child's teacher if there is something you would like to bring to their classroom.

NOTE TO PARENTS Q300 will be sponsoring a six-hour Learning Leaders training program (three 2-hour sessions), so that parents will be trained to assist in the kindergarten and first grade Reading Blocks, help staff the Library, and other academic capacities. For those interested, please contact Ellie at membership@q300pta.org

Teachers Breakfast - December 23rd





The Atom Smashers - Q300's 6th Grade Winning Lego Robotics Team

Grade Updates

Kindergarten

On every Tuesday from early January through mid-February, **K-1 parent James has been teaching music appreciation**. His lessons are providing an important foundation for the students in preparation for Brooklyn Conservatory of Music's music enrichment program, which will begin after the February school break. Thank you for volunteering your time James! The kindergarteners are also participating in another enrichment program, where they are **practicing yoga** every other Monday.

Parents may have noticed their child bringing home books from a **higher reading level**. The children use those books in reading class and should bring them back to school every day. In math, the class has been continuing to **learn how to recognize, copy, extend and create patterns**. In the science unit, children are learning about wood and paper.

In technology, the class continues to learn new basic programming, logic, problem solving, debugging, and creativity. Before holiday break, technology teacher Scott sent home a letter about an online course at **code.org**. The course is a supplement to what's going on in school.

It's designed in a way where it's fun for the children to practice writing code. If anybody cannot access the course or has misplaced their login information, write a quick e-mail to Scott at: Scott@Q300.org.

During Friday's "**show and tell**", K-1 students can show one special thing and talk about it. Such item must be small enough to fit inside the student's backpack, inexpensive, and not easy to break.

NOTE TO KINDERGARTEN PARENTS:

Eileen and Jackie have recently set up teacher's wish lists of items for the classroom on Amazon.com. You can make a donation through the following links:

Eileen's wish list can be found at:
http://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/31DMP8S940CKK/ref=cm_sw_su_w

Jackie's wish list can be found at:
<http://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/?ie=UTF8&cid=A1P0AT2ZYNKMST>

First Grade

In science, students are **studying air properties and weather**. In investigating air, students are determining whether objects such as feathers, foam balls, cotton balls, and balloons can be moved by and through air. Further, they have used vials, paper, towels and basins to explore the idea that air takes up space. They also constructed their own parachutes to see how air slows the descent of a parachute and have learned what bubbles can tell us about air. In their investigation of weather, students have examined and studied different weather instruments, such as a thermometer and a rain gauge. They also have looked closely at different types of clouds and the weather they bring.

In a writing unit titled, "Review," students have been **learning to write opinions**. First, they brought to school collections of items, including action figures, special pencils, unique stuffed animals, figures, jewelry, shells, rock collections and collectible cards. They then drafted their views on which collection was the best and why. Some of the ideas covered in the unit included:

1. Making sure that you stated your opinion;
2. Providing lots of reasons for your opinion;
3. Adding details to your opinion by saying why;
4. Quoting experts and friends; and
5. Talking back to the reader

The students have now begun to **write reviews of books, places, games, and movies** that matter to them. After seeing the play, "A White House Adventure" at Queensborough Community College on February 13, the students will write a review of the play.

The students started a new math unit this week titled "**Solving Story Problems**." In this unit, they will be solving story problems, composing numbers using multiple addends, creating equivalent expressions, developing strategies for counting large amount of objects, and recording their responses using standard notation ($>$, $<$, $+$, $-$, $=$). Students will play games that help build their understanding of relationships of numbers. These games include Counters in a Cup, Five in a Row, How Many Am I Hiding?, Roll and Record, and Dot Addition.

In Physical Education, the students continue to **prepare for the Fitnessgram assessment**, which is a widely used physical fitness and physical activity evaluation for children. They are practicing curl-ups, push-ups, and the pacer, which is a multi-stage aerobic capacity test. They also are continuing with t-ball and have begun yoga.


Sixth Grade

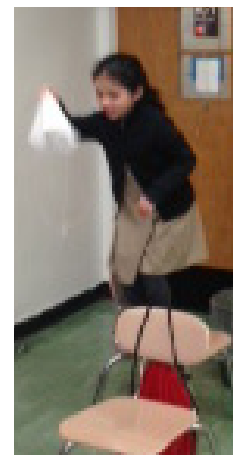
On January 24th, Q300's Lego robotics team **Atom Smashers** have **advanced to the New York City championship**. The Atom Smashers, along with three other Q300 teams—Mini-figures, Senior Tech, and the XXL Fluffy Bunnies—had competed in the First Lego League Queens Invitational tournament. Principal Willard, Betty, the Vassar student intern, and many, many parents were there to cheer them all on! Congratulations to all the teams for their hard work! Special thanks to their coach, technology teacher Scott.

The students began a 15-week **violin program** run by the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music. Each class has 15 students and occurs on Wednesdays and Fridays. Please submit your student's rental form, if you have not done so yet.

The students recently visited the Ancient Egyptian art hall at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The trip was in connection with their Humanities unit on river valley civilizations.

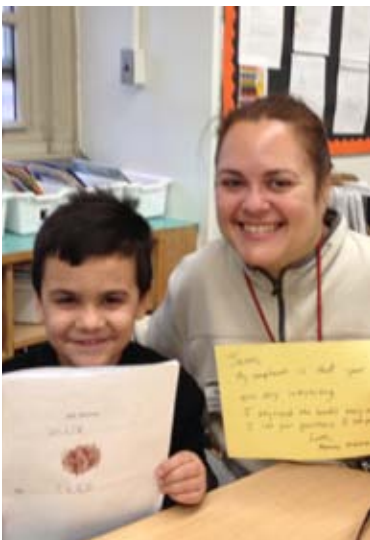
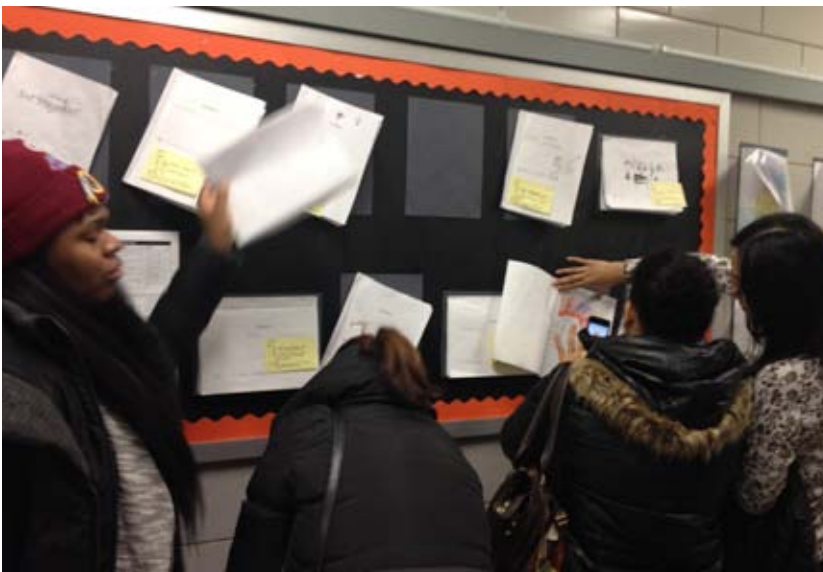
Beginning this week, in science, the class is studying **ecology and ecosystems**, including water systems and environmental conditions. The unit will be embedded into the engineering lab, as students design ways to contain and clean up a river oil spill. Students will also participate in computer simulations of animal population growth.

In math, the students will begin a unit of **Coverings and Surroundings** which focuses on two and three dimension areas. They will also design a three dimension paper container that meets specific surface area and volume standards. 



First graders in class

First Grade Publishing Party



Upcoming News & Events

PTA Executive Board Meeting February 5th
8:30AM

Q300 Movie Night February 6th 5:30PM

First Grade Writing Celebration February 11th
from 8:30 to 9:05 am

Picture Day February 12th

District 30 Community Education Council Meeting February 12th 6:30 – 9:30 at PS 234,
30-15 29th Street, LIC

Parents' Alliance for Education (PACE), a coalition of parents who seek to advance Citywide gifted and talented education, meets on February 23rd at 6:30 pm at Q300

First Grade Field Trip to Queensborough Community College to see A White House Adventure February 13th

Mid-Winter Recess February 16th – 20th

DOE Panel for Educational Policy Meeting Feb. 25th 6 – 8 PM, at Michael J Petrides School, 715 Ocean Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301

PTA General Meeting February 26th 6:30PM

The K 1 & 6 class reps are planning an informal social gathering over winter break, probably on Sunday February 22nd. Stay tuned!

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