

## Meet Mr. Woo, MS Math Teacher

By Jon Springer



Every morning in Mr. Woo's classroom, 6th and 7th graders arrive to find a new question on the blackboard.

Did you hear about the sensitive burglar? (*He took things personally*)

What state has the smallest soft drinks? (*Mini soda*)

What kind of flowers talk the most? (*Tulips*)

Though Mr. Woo teaches math, he says having students take a stab at the answer of a cheesy joke or awful pun

on the board each day inspires them to think and helps to reinforce a positive connection in class. For Mr. Woo, laughter and learning go hand in hand.

Other times, word play is integrated directly into the day's lesson. "Why did the horse chew with his mouth open?" one worksheet given to 6th graders this year asked. Solving math problems, students found letters in an answer key that spelled out the punch line: He had bad stable manners.

Mr. Woo literally wears his enthusiasm for his subject on his back. IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL SOMEONE DIVIDES BY ZERO reads one of his t-shirts. I GRADUATED COLLEGE WITH A DEGREE IN MATH. OF COURSE I HAVE PROBLEMS says another. He understands that math can be a challenge for students, but believes that challenge should be an enjoyable and rewarding one.

Mr. Woo is in his first year teaching at Q300. He came to the school following two years teaching gifted and talented students at the Anderson School on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. One reason he made the move to Q300, he says, was to be closer to his home in Bayside, Queens, where he grew up and still resides.

Mr. Woo, who graduated from Cordozo High in Bayside, has a degree in applied mathematics and statistics from Stony Brook University and says he originally set out for a career in actuarial science — but after a friend suggested he consider teaching, he discovered a calling from the classroom, not the insurance industry. "I like connecting with people in general and found that teaching is a way I can do that," he says. He received a masters degree from Teachers College at Columbia University. His previous teaching jobs include a charter school in the Bronx, I.S. 237 in Flushing and two stints at the Anderson School.

Mr. Woo says he's happy with the staff and students at Q300. The

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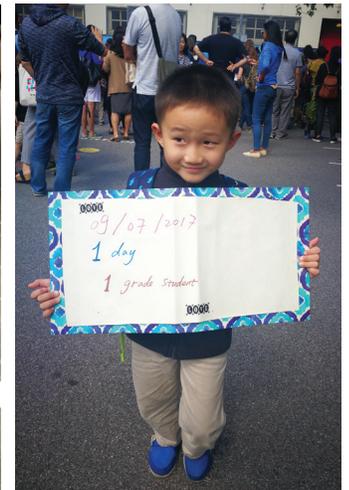
## Third Grade Trip to Green Meadows Farm

By Hillit Zwick

Photos by Hillit Zwick and Sue Sekar

The 3rd grade trip to Green Meadows Farm was a fun and lively experience. The kids fed alpacas and sheep, milked cows (seemingly the most exciting part of the trip!), learned about pigs, and even rode ponies! We ended the trip with a bumpy hay-ride and pumpkin picking, a perfect fall adventure. Just another day in New York City! ☺





## First Day of School at Q300!

ROW ONE: Loic and George, First Grade; Sasha, Second Grade; Liam, Third Grade; Advait, Second Grade. ROW TWO: Julie, Fourth Grade, and Josephine, Second Grade; Johnny, Third Grade; Joshua, Second Grade. ROW THREE: Louis, Fourth Grade; Eli, First Grade; Nedelya, Kindergarten; Brad, First Grade. ROW FOUR: Emmett, Akiva, and Adam, Sixth Grade; Diana and Konstantina, Sixth Grade; Emily, Second Grade.

# Meet Ms. Lodespoto, MS Spanish Teacher

By Will Bachman

**Will:** What language did you speak growing up?

**Ms. L:** Growing up I was a native speaker of English. I come from an Italian-American family, where Italian was spoken in the family but not to me directly. I actually pursued my studies of Italian because I wanted to be able to practice and speak it to my grandmother and family members in Italy.

**W:** What made you want to learn Spanish?

**Ms. L:** The friendships I had. We do have some Spanish speaking relatives. I think the culture is beautiful and it's spoken in so many countries around the world that I always had this interest in travel, and you really can travel to 20-something countries in the world that speak Spanish.

**W:** How did you learn Spanish?

**Ms. L:** I formally didn't learn Spanish until I took a course in college. After college and before grad school I actually went to Spain for a few months and took an intensive immersion course. I was placed in an intermediate class because of my knowledge of Italian; however, I didn't know basic vocabulary and terminology, so I realized how hard it was to get around without those words. So I quickly acquired basic vocabulary just by asking questions and practicing and not being afraid.

When you pursue another language and travel, you learn to connect better with people around the world. Coming back home to New York after traveling around Latin America made me better understand some of the cultures around us.

**W:** How do you address the challenge of teaching students who are new to Spanish as well as native speakers in the same class?

**Ms. L:** Having native speakers is a challenge, however I usually turn to them to help to teach others, to share some of their own experiences either growing up, or to share different words they may use in their households. I think that they help to enrich the class as a whole. Hopefully, they learn something from me, that there are other ways to say something they've been saying their whole lives. So many times, kids challenge me and say, "But that's not how we say it," or, "That's wrong," and then all of a sudden find out that it's not wrong, it's different. It gets them to open their minds too.

**W:** For the students who are new to Spanish, how much fluency should they expect to have by the year's end?

**Ms. L:** By the end of seventh grade, they should be able to order in a restaurant, count, have basic forms of communication, such as basic introductions and greetings, and directions. If they were to go to a Spanish speaking country, they should be able to get their point across and communicate.

**W:** Are there other apps or tools or cultural experiences, TV shows, movies that you would point parents to?

**Ms. L:** My own kids love Duolingo. Studyspanish.com, qui-

zlet.com. I tell them to watch their favorite movies in Spanish because they can just listen to the language.

**W:** So, Star Wars in Spanish.

**Ms. L:** Exactly. I'm also hoping to take them to a restaurant where they can speak in Spanish and order, and I'd like to take them to either museums or theater in the city. And we're going to expose them to lots of music in Spanish this year.

**W:** What would you like to see for the students in the classes who maybe have a Spanish-speaking parent and some previous exposure to the language?

**Ms. L:** Reading books is always great, even if it's a book that they've already read in English. That's how we can connect across the curriculum. Also, speaking a lot. I tell the kids, "Speak to your parents a lot in Spanish."

**W:** What made you excited about coming to Q300?

**Ms. L:** I have lived in Astoria for a very long time. I've wanted to work here at Q300 because these students are very curious and will pursue their studies outside of the classroom.

**W:** Where should kids learning Spanish aspire to be by the end of eighth grade?

**Ms. L:** There is a proficiency test that requires them to have basic communication skills they're going to use in everyday settings. They should aspire to feel comfortable communicating by the time they get to high school, and have a love for the language. In this school, it's required that every eighth grader take that test in June. They should be able to compose some short paragraphs as well as answer some multiple choice questions about literature, and they should be able to read, write, speak and have proficient listening comprehension by the end eighth grade. 🎧

To hear the full interview, visit <http://bit.ly/2xWEiC4>

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students, he says, have impressed him with an authentic willingness to learn and enthusiasm for his fast-moving and immersive classes. "I try to challenge as much as I can, and they're soaking it in," he says. He finds the Q300 perspective refreshingly different from other G&T schools he has experienced, where some students tend to see the distinction as a kind of privilege.

Outside of school, Mr. Woo says he enjoys attending his church, trying new restaurants, rooting for the Yankees, and playing games board games, fantasy sports and "old-school" video games like NES and Super Nintendo. He augments his unique t-shirts with an even more impressive closet at home: He is a proud owner of more than 50 pairs of shoes and more than 70 hats. 🎧

# Letter from the PTA Co-Presidents

Dear Fellow Q300 Families:

Hello and welcome to the 2017–2018 school year! We hope you all had a smooth transition from summer into your fall schedules. The school has had an exciting and strong start of the school year. We are thankful for all the work done by the administration, staff, and families to help create a wonderful community where our children can learn and grow.

Each year, Q300 keeps growing. We now have approximately 470 students in K-4 & 6-8th grades. We have 10 new teachers, the return of Jackie Bosco to teach first grade, a wonderful new vice principal, Anna Milonakis, and our new SEL coordinator, Erika Ball, who moved into this position from the classroom. We have enjoyed meeting the new families from across the city and look forward to learn more about you and your children. To the new families and new staff, welcome to the Q300 community!

In September, we had great parent engagement nights and we were happy to see so many parents present at both the elementary and middle schools. In October, we hope that you join us at the Costume party on Sunday, October 29, which promises to be a whole lot of fun for all! We also look forward to Night at the Gallery, an event just for parents on November 10.

We had a great summer and September for PTA fundraising and were able to raise funds close to \$12,000 via Mulee school supply boxes, summer readathon, and parent engagement bake sale. We have launched our direct appeal and hope this year to raise \$222,000. PTA contributions support the following at Q300: 7 TAs for K-4, Art House Astoria for K-4, Alvin Ailey Dance (grades 3, 4 & 6-8), Architecture (2), Brooklyn Conservatory of Music (K-4, 6-8), Theater (6-8), supplemental funding for enrichment clubs (6-8), Chromebooks and robotics kits for the middle school, as well as some other costs like ceremonies, hardship fund, and related administrative costs across the school.

There are always plenty of opportunities to volunteer with the Q300 PTA: You can contribute to the newsletter, you can serve on one of our many committees (such membership, enrichment, one school, and grant committee), or you can help at an event. We also have lots of behind the scenes work so if you have web skills, editing skills, story writing skills, then we have a job for you. If you haven't already done so, please fill out the Volunteer survey. You are also welcome to suggest ways you think you can contribute and lead something new. We are always happy to receive your ideas, talents, and resources!

This community is your community and we know that we are better if more contribute at any level. We are thankful to all for contributions, and together, we all build a strong school for our kids!

Maria Hantzopoulos & Margarita Soto  
co-Presidents, Q300 PTA

## Upcoming News & Events

**10/29 Costume Party** 3:00–5:00 pm at the PS 17 campus. Our annual costume party is a fun-filled event for the whole family! We will have music, magic, fun, activities, pizza, and raffle prizes. Buy online at: <http://bit.ly/2hVTZn7>

**11/10 Gallery Night.** 7 pm at Clamp Art, 247 W 29th St, Ground Floor. Tickets are \$50, friends and family are welcome! Adults only. Enjoy food, wine, and art at a midtown contemporary art gallery for the benefit of Q300 students! For more information and tickets, visit <http://bit.ly/2gWUJZt>

**11/23–11/24 Thanksgiving Recess.** School closed.

**11/29 Parent Teacher Conferences.**

**12/25–1/1 Winter Recess.** School closed.

### 2017 Thanksgiving Pie Order

The Q300 PTA is excited to partner again with La Guli Pastry Shop of Astoria to provide delicious pies for our Thanksgiving feasts and to help raise funds for school programs.

All pies are 8 inches and cost \$15 each or \$15.75 for online orders (transaction fee added) Same price as last year!

Order and pay online at <https://www.q300pta.net/2017pies/>

**Deadline: Friday November 10, 2017!**

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We welcome your contributions, if you have article ideas or photos for the next newsletter contact Amanda Spielman at [communications@q300pta.org](mailto:communications@q300pta.org).