



**The 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue School (Q300)**

**Elementary Campus**

28-37 29th Street, 4th Floor, Astoria, NY 11102

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**Middle School Campus**

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[www.Q300.org](http://www.Q300.org)

**Vasilios Biniaris, Principal**

**School Leadership Team Meeting**

**April 16, 2018**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Vasilios Biniaris, Principal

Sarah Duer, Teacher

Elijah Cho, Teacher

Ali Lisberger, UFT Rep

Jennifer Choi, Parent

Mara Cusker Gonzalez, Parent

Maria Hantzopoulos, PTA Co-President

Monica Mohan, Parent

**Members Absent:**

Alex Lunz, Teacher

Elizabeth Yarmy, Parent

**Observers:**

Anna Milonakis, Assistant Principal

Erica Ureña-Thus, Director of School Renewal, Community School District 30, Office of the Superintendent

**Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM.**

**Review and approval of minutes from March 19, 2018.**

**Update on Supportive Environment Survey:**

- All of the teacher, parent and student surveys were collected. K-2 needs to be hand input since they were done on paper. Monica volunteered to do that.
- Approximately 98 Middle School (MS) (6-8) survey results have been collected out of 180 kids. MS students need additional time to complete. The group agreed to extend the deadline for another week, until April 23.
  - Ali will send reminders for MS students to complete.
  - We will defer further discussion until next month's meeting.



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**Parent Report:**

- The PTA has organized the annual Stepping Into Summer party and auction for Sunday, May 6, 2018, at the Bohemian Hall and Beer Garden. Prizes have been collected. Teachers and staff are invited to attend free of charge.
- Voting on participatory budgeting has closed and we are awaiting results. Q300 had two items on the ballot: (1) funds for updating the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor library at PS 17, which would be shared and would include a research lab with digital access; and (2) a new gate for IS 126.
- Square 1 Arts fundraiser ends Thursday, April 19.
- Anna has helped organize a Mets game outing with the PS 17 community.
- Teacher Appreciation Day is Tuesday, May 8. Parents are organizing breakfasts and several other efforts to express our appreciation for the teachers and staff.
- March Madness increased the Direct Appeal fundraising to \$188,000 for the year. David Wang has spearheaded the efforts and Amanda Spielman has designed the materials.
- Alvin Ailey Family Fun Night on March 23 was a success.
- The Elementary School (ES) Open House for interested families and students went well.
- Several parents attended the Partnership for Citywide Education Forum on April 13, 2018, to represent Q300.
- On April 12, 2018, Dr. Composto met with Q300 parents in response to concerns raised during the March PTA meeting, which Dr. Composto was unable to attend. The meeting was well attended, with more than 100 parents, and many parents spoke. The concerns they raised included concerns about the school's educational vision, teacher retention and wellbeing, loss of community trust, support for students with IEPs and other special needs including the struggle to provide mandated ICT teachers in the first four months of the year, the content on the school website and process by which it was changed and rebranded, the issues with the ES Spanish and Technology curriculums and staffing, the 8th-grade science program and readiness for the Regents, the lack of English as a



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New Language (ENL) services required for students with the mandate, and the social emotional program. In consultation with Dr. Composto, neither Bill nor Anna attended the meeting. Parents who were unable to attend were able to follow via Facebook updates, and minutes will be prepared.

**Principal's Report:**

- Bill read a written report, in which he acknowledged that a number of important concerns and common themes have been raised by the school community; apologized for fractures in the community; and identified steps that he has taken and intends to take to try to repair them and address the concerns, including:
  - establishing a website committee to work collaboratively to improve the school website in a way that reflects the school's core values;
  - expanding the school-wide cabinet to include teachers who were hired during Matt Willard's tenure (namely, Ali Lisberger and Alex Lunz);
  - adding monthly faculty meetings with team-building activities;
  - supporting and training teachers in inquiry-based learning;
  - scheduling monthly meetings with parents and with students;
  - creating a schedule for teachers to have additional planning time;
  - adding to the SLT's meeting agenda a regular "pulse" update on school culture; and
  - immediately forming a committee with parents of students with IEPs to inform the school's work with twice-exceptional students and students with special needs and making sure the school's website provides information about this commitment.
- Bill announced that first-grade teacher Cristina Baron has rescinded her resignation after further discussions.
- Bill expressed a commitment to inquiry-based learning and also suggested that gifted and talented standards and best practices are not inconsistent with, and can provide a way to implement, the school's core values.



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- A candid discussion followed, with members responding to Bill's report and proposed path forward. There were concerns expressed about how issues the school is facing were foreseen by many and could and should have been addressed sooner to avoid the instability. Members also expressed support for increasing transparency and honesty in communications by and with school administration and for improving planning and preparedness for the coming school year.
- Bill noted that many concerns have been raised about preparation for the new 5th grade classes next year. Preparation is underway even though it may not be visible. There will be a meeting with the fourth-grade parents and they will have the opportunity to visit the MS in May.
- There was a recognition that the school faces particular challenges because it is serving 500 students across 2 campuses, but both campuses are able to successfully handle the many transitions that happen every day, including arrivals, dismissals, changing classes.
- There was agreement that staff and teachers are working extremely hard and many students are happy, but there have been concerns raised by some students and parents about students feeling a shift in instruction and stability, including, but not only in, the area of social emotional learning.
- A staff member commented that there is a feeling of positivity among teachers and a desire to work together to fix problems and make next year a great one. The administration is working to increase transparency and communication.

**School Website Survey:**

- The group reviewed the results of the SLT's Website Survey and followed a discussion protocol to obtain information about the process through which the school website was redeveloped by Bill, provide feedback on the redeveloped website, including its strengths and areas of growth, and identify a plan for further redeveloping the website in a collaborative way that realigns the site with the school's values and mission.



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- The survey results provide a range of feedback, but one clear message is that there is a disparity between the messaging on the redeveloped website and the school's core values. The website should be improved to better communicate our values and approach to inquiry-based and holistic education, consistent with our CEP.
- Bill explained that a vendor, EduTech, was retained to implement the redevelopment and will be available through the rest of the school year to make additional changes. The allocation from the budget for the vendor was around \$3,000. Thereafter, monthly costs for maintaining the site will likely be \$200-\$300.
- The discussion included the following warm feedback on the redeveloped site: easy to navigate; good teacher resources; the old site needed a “facelift” and update.
- The discussion included the following cool feedback on the redeveloped site: it does not capture the “feel” and approach of the school; missing teacher bios; need to improve and correct information about academic programs; too much jargon; original website colors and logo were more appropriate for the school and more vibrant; need to incorporate more images and videos.
- The group agreed to create an SLT subcommittee to guide further redevelopment of the site in stages over the coming weeks and months. The subcommittee will include Bill, Anna, Ali, Sara, Maria, Jennifer, Monica, and Mara. It will invite parents in the school community with expertise in website development and design to volunteer time to consult on technical and design issues.

**UFT Report:**

- Ali reported on a meeting last week with Dr. Composto and Bill Fahey from District 30 and a meeting with Bill and Anna today. Teachers have expressed a desire to work together with the administration to address and face the concerns and improve the school.



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**Other Business:**

- At Bill's suggestion, the group agreed to add an SLT meeting date to the annual calendar to discuss budget and staffing for the 2018-19 school year. We will meet on April 30 from 5:30-7:30 p.m., to discuss the budget for next year and its alignment with CEP.
- For the next regularly-scheduled meeting, on May 7, we will need to work on the CEP goals. There has also been a parent request to add a discussion of the school's reading program to the agenda.

**Remuneration logs were not available; will be completed at next meeting.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.**

**Next meeting will be April 30, 2018, to discuss the budget.**