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# Newsletter

30th Avenue School – Inclusion. Inquiry. Responsibility.

## SEPTEMBER 2020 ISSUE

In past years, the first PTA newsletter of the school year would come out in October so we could feature pictures and articles documenting our kids' start to the school year. However, this, as we all know, is not a normal school year! In an effort to bring our Q300 community together, the PTA is sending this newsletter out at the start of the year to welcome new families virtually.

It's important during this time, as our Q300 community deals with remote/blended learning and a health crisis, to remember [our school philosophy](#). See what our Q300 students have been up to in the [Summer Adventures](#) section and explore the New York metropolitan area by bike with our feature on [one family's exciting excursions](#). Learn more about [one of our new kindergarten families](#), "read up" on the [Summer 2020 Read-a-Thon fundraiser](#), and take note of [remote learning hacks](#) for a smooth transition back to school.

We wish everyone a successful start to the new school year and look forward to "coming together" as a community to support one another. We can't wait to see all we will accomplish as a community over the 2020-21 school year!

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## Summer Adventures\*



*Top: Cassie (6th grade), enjoying a bike ride while taking in the scenery. Bottom: Eric (2nd grade), left, learns to ride a bike, and Kaitlyn (2nd grade) and her sister visiting Niagara Falls, right.*



*Top:* Rose (5th grade), exploring her new neighborhood in Long Island City. *Bottom:* Kate (3rd grade), *left*, enjoying a never ending crop of cherry tomatoes, and Myriam (7th grade), *right*, with Jerry Mimosa, her new bunny.



*Clockwise from top left:* Artemis (5th grade), digging into the best blueberry pie ever in Maine; Nicolas Oettinger (4th grade), enjoying a whole steamed lobster; Jace (2nd grade), enjoying her summer; and Peyton and Liam (8th grade), next to a statue of Nikola Tesla at Niagara Falls.



Celine (6th grade), *left*, at her first rock scramble in New Paltz, NY, and James (7th grade), *right*, with a fresh cut after barbershops opened back up this summer.

\*Note to new Q300 families: To get the latest news from the PTA, please fill out the [PTA Family Contact Survey](#). We also request that you fill out the [PTA Photo Consent Form](#). By filling out the form, you are giving the PTA permission to use your child's (or children's) photos in future newsletters, on the website, or in other publications.

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## Reflections on Our School Community

*Written by Marisa Nagano, Co-VP of PTA Community Affairs*

The start of the new school year is always a little chaotic. As we are all aware, this year is even more fraught than usual. As we face the uncertainties brought on by COVID-19, as well as the shadows of racial and social injustice in our city, nation, and world, now is perhaps a good time to strengthen the bonds of community, starting with our school, and, ideally, extending into our neighborhoods, our city, and beyond.

Fortunately for us, our school's mission aligns with the community building that many of us are craving in these difficult times. The school's mission, found on both the Q300 and the Q300 PTA websites, states:

### ***Our Mission***

*Through the inclusion of diverse student identities, inquiry based learning, and data-driven*

*decision making, Q300 will graduate students who collaborate with others to ask meaningful questions, to solve complex problems, and to engage responsibly with their communities and beyond. By exploring who they are and who they want to be, students engage in the active process of making knowledge and better understanding the world around them in ways that drive a sense of responsibility and action.*

Using our gifts and talents to serve our communities is built into the school's philosophy, and is reflected in our three core values:

***Inclusion***

*We inquire about others' families, interests, and dreams to know others as individuals. We give others what they need to succeed academically and socially.*

***Inquiry***

*We ask questions, investigate, analyze to make informed decisions, share our learning, and reflect.*

***Responsibility***

*We are on-time, prepared and complete tasks in a timely manner. We work in effective teams to solve problems. We use our gifts and talents to support our communities.*

A common theme throughout our mission and core values is consideration of all members of our community. We're not just here to learn, we're here to learn together, and to take what we've learned and use it to help us become responsible citizens of our school, our city, and our world.

This philosophy is central to how the PTA operates. For example, while we do fundraising like many other schools, we strive to follow a whole-school approach in developing budgets, working together with the school administration to make sure that funds are distributed equitably across the school while meeting the needs of individual teachers and classrooms whenever possible. We have a variety of fundraising events and initiatives to help make this happen, and we always emphasize that everyone is included and can participate. We also view all forms of volunteering - whether it is being a neighborhood liaison, a class parent, a school lunch volunteer, running a booth at the Costume Party, serving on the Audit Committee - as equally valuable as monetary donations and vital for making our community thrive.

As another example of how we build community, earlier this summer, last year's Membership chairs hosted informal Zoom meetings to brainstorm on ways that we can build our community in spite of the restrictions on in-person meetings due to COVID-19. We are currently working as a PTA Board along with the school administration to develop these ideas. We are also planning a "Virtual" Back to School Picnic in September. While not the same as our usual in-person picnic in Rainey Park, we are grateful to have

alternative ways to connect during the pandemic.

Even without a pandemic, the challenges of building community at a city-wide school are real. We live in different parts of the city, and it can be difficult to get to know other parents and other families. For the time being, we will be holding our PTA meetings remotely (pending updated guidelines from the Chancellor), which will hopefully allow as many members as possible to attend. We understand that, especially in these difficult times, schedules may be strained, but we also hope that PTA members, old and new, will consider volunteering for the PTA. The PTA will be sending a volunteer survey out soon to gauge interest.

As the new school year begins, we hope that our school community will find ways to connect and to thrive, and that our core values of *Inclusion*, *Inquiry*, and *Responsibility* will guide our community through the difficult months ahead.

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## New to the Q300 Community: Meet the Kermish Family

*The beginning of every school year brings with it new families that join the Q300 community. We had the opportunity to chat with Ziggy Kermish and Janine Yoong, parents to Q300 kindergartener Otis, and ask them a few questions about themselves, their summer, and their hopes for this coming school year. Please extend a warm welcome to Otis and his family!*

### **Tell us a little bit about yourselves.**

Ziggy grew up in New Jersey and Janine is from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We live in Greenpoint, Brooklyn with our two boys, Otis (age 5) and Ezra (14 months). We love the neighborhood feel of Greenpoint. Its central location makes it a great hub for us to explore hole-in-the-wall restaurants in all the boroughs (one of our favorite family activities pre-pandemic). We both work in tech, Ziggy in data science and Janine on business and operations. Otis' jobs include picking up after his brother and being critical of the user interfaces of apps he's started using.

### **How did you spend your summer?**

It was a pretty tough summer for us all. We usually travel to visit family in Maine and Malaysia, but we hunkered down in Brooklyn this summer. We go for socially distant walks whenever we can. Otis has gone from being very sad about being stuck at home and not being able to hang out with his friends, to never wanting to leave the house, to now wanting to go for very long adventure walks every day. We got him a book called *The History of Rock: For Big Fans and Little Punks* for his birthday in May, which profiles rock

bands since the 1950's, so we've been reliving our own musical journeys through Otis. He has now taken to creating very long (and surprisingly good!) playlists. Otis has also learned how to make simple video games and stop motion Lego videos through a remote summer program called Geek Forest (recommended!). Our younger one is happily oblivious and just likes toddling to the window and looking outside.



### **What attracted you to Q300?**

Like everyone else new to the school, we were unable to tour in-person, but we really connected with the people we saw on the virtual tour and during the live Q & A sessions. The school's core values resonated with us and its diverse student population was another draw. Current parents in our local parents' community groups were also very encouraging about the school.

### **What experiences do you hope Otis and your family will gain during this first year at Q300?**

2020 has really taken a lot out of all of us and remote learning during pre-K was a challenge, so at this point, we would be thrilled if Otis is able to make new friends and is happy during this unique introduction to the school and community. We're excited for him to have the opportunity to explore his interests and find a new crew to learn with during this school year.

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## **Summer Read-a-Thon Update and Bookstore Resources**

*Written by Claire Lui, VP of PTA Fundraising*

Though so much of this school year remains uncertain, what is certain is our students' love of reading. Our annual PTA summer Read-a-Thon fundraiser, like everything else, looked a little different this year. Instead of promoting the Read-a-Thon as a competition between grades to win a class activity or pizza party, we wanted to make the 2020 Read-a-Thon a schoolwide communal activity this summer. With the distancing we all felt as a result of



remote learning over the spring, this approach to the Read-a-Thon not only gave the Q300 community an event they could rally around, but also emphasized the collectivist approach Q300 takes in raising money for the entire community.

At Q300, we take a whole school approach to fundraising, with all grades and students benefiting from the funds. While some schools may use a teacher- or grade-focused approach to fundraising, we work with school administration to identify needs across the school so we can supplement all teachers and students with materials, enrichments, and other resources through a general fund. This approach helps us ensure an equitable approach is taken to distribute resources and meet the most pressing needs across the K-8 grades.

In the past, PTA fundraising has paid for “specials” such as art and music enrichment, teaching assistants for the Lower Division, Chromebooks, teacher supplies, professional development, and more. This year, the PTA is also exploring how funds may be used to meet health, safety, and technology needs at Q300 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To date, we have raised over \$1,200 through the Read-a-Thon. However, just because summer has ended does not mean the Read-a-Thon is over! **To help us reach our \$5,000 goal, we will continue collecting donations online throughout September.** [Click here](#) to donate to the Read-a-Thon or share information about it through social media. If every family at Q300 is able to donate or raise \$10 for the Read-A-Thon, we will meet our fundraising goal for the event!

In a time of such economic uncertainties, we appreciate your support in spreading the word about the Read-a-Thon to friends and family. Due to COVID-19, we will be unable to hold traditional in-person fundraising and community building events for the foreseeable future. For instance, we were unable to hold the annual Stepping into Summer Party and Auction, our primary annual fundraising event, which alone raised more than \$21,000 in 2019 for our school. With tighter school budgets this school year and greater anticipated needs across our school due to the pandemic, your support to the Q300 community will make a significant impact on all of our students.

Thank you for all that you do to support Q300—together we are Q300 strong!

### **Book Resources**

Of course, reading doesn't stop when summer is over! Below are some resources to find great books for your students. Most of these sites also offer suggested reading lists by grade level if you're looking for some ideas!

### *Free Resources*

- For e-books, the New York and Queens Public Libraries have large selections of children's books. Several branches have also opened for pickup and returns only.

Please check with your local library website for more information.

- Neighborhood Facebook “Buy Nothing” groups and [Little Free Library](#) boxes are a great way to swap and discover new books.

### *Online Resources*

- We have a partnership with Children’s Bookstore. [Shop through our link](#) and the PTA will receive 15% (30% during select times) of your purchase amount.
- [Bookshop.org](#) is an online site that allows you to shop for books and support the local, independent bookstore of your choice. Participating bookstores include The Lit. Bar, a Black-owned bookstore in the Bronx, or The Bookstore at the End of the World, a virtual bookstore benefiting laid-off booksellers, many from New York City.
- To support Q300 through your book purchases (or any other items) from Amazon, [click through our affiliate link](#) and choose Q300 PTA as your Amazon Smile charity recipient.
- If you ordered from Scholastic flyers pre-COVID-19, you should have received an email from Scholastic with your teacher’s code. [Shop online](#) to get your order shipped directly to your home and help your classroom teacher earn points to buy more books for their classroom library collection.

### *In-person Resources*

- Two local independent bookstores that have supported Q300 PTA through auction donations and book fairs are [Astoria Bookshop](#) and [Book Culture](#). Both are open for curbside pickup and Book Culture is also open for browsing.

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## **Go Biking!**

*Written by David William Wang*

All it took to transform our summer was a pair of multi-speed kids’ bikes we snagged on Craigslist. Those two small bikes gave us access to fresh air, nature, and exercise, while making it easy to practice physical distancing.

The bikes aren’t fancy, and our kids – Q300 6th grader Liam and his sister, Q300 2nd grader Lila – were not experienced cyclists when they started riding in June. But since then, they have logged more than 475 miles biking. Our one-day record (so far!) is 27 miles. Seeking out trails that are relatively flat and protected from traffic, we’ve explored the Little Bay Park Greenway in Queens, Shore Parkway in Brooklyn, and the Jamaica Bay Greenway. “Biking can be freeing,” remarked Liam.



One of our favorite rides is a nearly 34-mile trail from New Brunswick to Trenton in the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park in New Jersey. The shady, relatively flat path is made of fine textured crushed stone, with the Canal on one side and the Raritan River or other waters on the other. We made several day trips to the Canal. The kids have done short hikes along the Canal, spying on

deer, tortoises, hawks, snakes, and great blue herons. We paddled along the Canal in rented canoes and kayaks at Griggstown and Princeton and learned about the Canal's operation and its history. Another favorite is the uninterrupted Old Putnam, Southern, Northern, and Putnam Counties trailway in the Bronx and points north. Closer to home, the local schoolyard is a favorite spot.

If your family would like to join in the fun but you're not sure where to start, [please take a look at the spreadsheet we've put together](#). It includes local bike routes that we did this past summer, as well as others, along with short descriptions, maps, and informative websites. Please note that route details may have changed, so please do a quick internet search before your trip.

Please follow [bike safety tips](#), including wearing a bicycle helmet and obeying traffic laws.

The following are informative websites to help plan your bike trips:

1. [NYC Bike Maps](#) provides maps of local bike paths, bike lanes, and greenway, including whether such routes are dedicated to bikes or are shared with cars and other vehicles.
2. The New York City DOT has an [official NYC bike map](#), which is updated annually.
3. [AllTrails](#) provides information on bike routes (as well as hiking trails), including terrain, difficulty, and biker reviews.

Please feel to reach out to me at davidw [at] q300pta.org with your suggested kid-appropriate bike routes.

Happy trails!

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# Tips for Remote Learning

As we get ready for the start of the school year, we, along with many of you, have been looking for resources to help us and our kids master the art of remote learning. We have been getting some great tips from Q300 families and finding some of our own, so continue reading to get some ideas on starting strong with remote learning. If you have tips or hacks you would like to share, send them along to us at [newsletter@q300pta.org](mailto:newsletter@q300pta.org).

- ["22 Remote Learning Tips For Parents Helping At Home"](#) from TeachThought. - *Sent in by Ellie Rabinovich (parent of K, 4th, and 6th graders).*
- Making use of Amazon's Alexa device, if you have one:
  - ["Remote Learning in Quarantine Is Hard. Alexa Reminders and Routines Can Help"](#) by Wirecutter.
  - Using Alexa, if you have one, is an easy way to offload reminders. You can have the kids set reminders up themselves. Having them do as much of it as possible helps them think through what they need, and lets them own it. - *Tip from Ellie Rabinovich (parent of K, 4th, and 6th graders).*
- If DOE allows, teachers and students can use tools like Microsoft Teams and Dropbox. Microsoft Teams allows students to join meetings automatically through a link without a need for a dial-in number. Students can use Dropbox to save completed assignments and send a link to their teacher. Both applications work on cell phones and desktops. The key is to have assignments, etc. in one place to minimize confusion. - *Shared by Kabrini Yulisman (parent of 5th grader)*
- New York Times article on ["How to Protect Children's Eyes During Remote Learning"](#).
- A Crafty Classroom blog post, ["Free Mini Office Printables,"](#) with ideas for creating self-led student reference charts.
- Wirecutter article on ["How to Use Google Classroom Like a Pro"](#).

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## REMINDERS

### PTA General Membership Meeting

Thursday, September 24, 2020

6:00 pm EDT

*(instructions to come)*

### New PTA Website

<https://q300pta.org/>

*(Please see this site for all PTA-related updates.)*

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

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