

School Leadership Team Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Virtual Platform - Zoom
Wednesday, February 24, 2021
5:30 pm – 7.30 pm

Members in Attendance: Sonita Ramkishun (Principal), Ali Lisberger (SLT Timekeeper + UFT), Chidi Amasiani (Teacher), Kiera Sullivan (SLT Chairperson + Teacher), Jean Kim (Teacher, left at 7.10pm), Maria Hantzopoulos (PTA Co-President, joined at 6.10pm), Sara Clough (Parent), Sue Sekar (SLT Secretary + Parent), Ian Koh (Parent), Fiona Yung (Parent)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5.36pm.

2. Updates on G & T Admissions Process

The Chairperson (Kiera) gave permission for Daniel Hildreth, from the Office of Admissions, to address the SLT.

Daniel provided a brief overview of what G&T admissions will look like this year:

- There will be no G&T test for admissions
- Families will submit an interest form (application) to the DOE indicating their interest in and understanding of G&T programs and the application process (before any eligibility determination is made)
- For rising Kindergarten students, the child's DOE Pre-K teacher will submit a questionnaire about that child to determine eligibility
- Children who are not in a DOE pre-K program can have a short virtual interview with a member of Early Childhood. This will include children who are in private or charter school pre-K programs or who are not in any pre-K program
- The offering process will then be undertaken by the Office of Admissions – giving priority to siblings and also taking into account the diversity initiatives of each school
- Students in grades 1-3 will be admitted to G&T programs using the waitlist from 2020. This means that new students in these grades cannot participate in admissions this year

- The application period will be open March 8th until April 9th and families can apply through the myschools platform, or can reach out to Family Welcome Centres (over the phone)

Questions from the SLT and responses from Daniel:

Question: There is only a month to get families up to speed and support them in this new process, which doesn't seem to address the inequities and overall access issues to G&T programs

Response: This is only a one year plan for now and there is ongoing discussion about how to address those issues in the longer term. This interim process won't immediately solve for the current challenges and inequities.

Question: What can we do from a school perspective to get ready and support the community, given we only have a month, and what are our limitations?

Response: Some of the limitations are that we have very few materials to help the process, eg, handbooks, as it is such a new process. We will try and create a digital flyer that schools can use to share the basic information. We encourage schools and parent bodies to do community outreach if they can.

Questions: What will the questionnaire for incoming students assess? What will the pre-K teachers be submitting? What will interviewers be assessing and submitting? How do these assessments tie into Citywide vs District G&T programs?

Responses: Parent questionnaire (nomination form) should be a relatively low-level confirmation that you understand what a G&T program is, and want to apply for a placement for your child. I have not seen a draft of the teacher questionnaire yet, but I expect it to be a confirmation that this type of program will be appropriate for the child. In terms of what teachers and interviewers will be looking for, the DOE is looking at other national examples used elsewhere that focus more on gifted characteristics and behaviors, ie, indicators of potential giftedness. Interviewers will likely have a guided set of questions that address the same content as the pre-K teacher questionnaires. There is no discussion about the de-lineation of Citywide vs District programs.

Question: Is the diversity proposal going to apply for the Grade 1-3, even though it is waitlist-based?

Response: The answer is not a hard no, but probably will rely on the waitlist this year more than the diversity initiative. The diversity initiative will be more impactful for the Kindergarten admissions because of the number of seats available.

Question: Is there guidance as to how many students are likely to be acceptable for eligibility?

Response: No, there are no specific numbers.

Question: Will our diversity plan still be able to go through given the new enrollment process?

Response: Yes, it will still be possible, as part of the prioritization of seats. In some ways it may work even better than if testing were involved as it is a more open admissions process.

Question: Is the application process only online or is there a printed component?

Response: The online tool will be easy to use, but we will definitely support a family who reaches out to the Family Welcome Centre by phone.

Question: Are there any other ways to nominate or recommend a student if it doesn't come through a pre-K teacher nomination?

Response: We will try and be flexible as we want the process to be as open as possible.

Question: What about students with IEPs?

Response: All students are eligible to apply. The new admissions process will not take IEP status or disability status into account.

Daniel noted that they will be running information sessions in March (with sign language and multi-lingual translations) for the larger community to provide more information and answer questions. Parents can also reach out to the School of Admissions via email (Esenrollment@schools.nyc.gov) with queries in the meantime.

The SLT thanked Daniel for his attendance at the SLT meeting and for providing the information. Daniel left the meeting.

3. Review and approval of Jan 20, 2021 and Feb 4, 2021 SLT meeting minutes

The draft minutes from the January 20, 2021 meeting had been shared in advance. Maria made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Chidi. All were in favor; none abstained.

The draft minutes from the special SLT meeting on February 4, 2021 had been shared in advance. Sonita made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ali. All were in favor; none abstained.

The approved minutes will be published on the school and PTA websites.

4. Middle School Re-opening plan

Sonita provided the SLT with an update on the Middle School re-opening plans.

The Middle School first day of re-opening is tomorrow (February 26th) and staff were preparing the Middle School classrooms today. Sonita thanked the PTA for the 52 new laptops that were purchased for the Middle School and noted that the school is looking forward to receiving the next batch.

All blended and in-person students have been notified that they must provide their consent to get tested – about 90% have given consent online already.

With the opening of the upper division campus tomorrow, we will also move our 5th grade students from the lower division campus to the upper division campus.

5. Update on students returning 5 days a week

Sonita provided the SLT with an update on the students returning to in-person learning 5 days a week.

From March 1st, 28 Kindergarten students will be back full time (5 days). They will also have some COVID-19 safe enrichments as well as COVID-19 safe recess. Parents have been very supportive with this change.

Students with IEP's and/or at-risk students in Grades 6-8 have also been notified that they can attend in-person classes 5 days a week. This is a group of approximately 15 students. We do have some issues with room capacity as the classrooms at the upper division campus are smaller than at the lower division. We will continue to review numbers so we can get more students in.

Some parents have been asking about opting back in to blended learning. The school is maintaining a waitlist so if a student moves back into remote learning, they can open up that seat to a student who would like to opt back in.

Maria noted that the parents are very appreciative of how much the school is doing to try and bring students back and be flexible around all the different types of learning arrangements.

The whole SLT reflected on how challenging it has been, being remote for so long, and all are looking forward to having the middle school open to help re-energize our Middle School students and staff.

The SLT discussed how we could help connect our students more, even outside school, as the weather gets nicer. Are there ways we can support more social and academic connections?

Sara noted that students are still keeping their cameras off during remote learning, and questioned whether there are ways to encourage usage of cameras during virtual learning so there is some more engagement and connection. Ali has noted a lack of engagement, even beyond the screens being off, in that some students have not been answering questions or engaging in discussion – how can we have them speak up?

6. CEP Goals

Review Mid-Year Analysis

The Chairperson (Kiera) gave permission for Alejandra Roma, Maria Panagiotakis and Kan Chou to address the SLT.

Members from the school CEP team (Alejandra, Maria P., Kan and Chidi) provided an update on the mid-year analysis of growth and progress for K-8 against the CEP goals:

Literacy:

Across the school, there was growth of 35% and we are on track to meet our goals for the school year. Students with disabilities (“SWD”) in grades 6-8 also saw an increase of 4%. English Language Learners (“ELL”) went down by 7%.

Math:

Overall growth of 12% from all students, SWD (6-8) growth of 57% and ELL (6-8) had growth of 41%.

Science:

Overall growth of 1% from all students but no growth for SWD (6-8) or ELL (6-8).

Sonita noted that this was a different year for measuring student progress as the usual Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) were not done this year. The school used a variety of methods, including:

- For Literacy, we use MAP Growth to help assess our students. From that data, we realized our students were testing above their reading level, so we looked at the skills and standards being tested. We will do another MAP Growth assessment at the end of the school year.

- For Math, we use beginning, middle and end of year assessments
- For Science, we look at how many hands-on activities are being completed by grade.

Discuss noticings and wonderings

The SLT broke-out into their CEP focus groups to discuss the mid-year analysis of student progress to date, and then shared their discussions with the large group:

Literacy:

- Beginning and middle of year assessments used different measures (state test scores and MAP Growth), so the group reflected on how we can get more accurate, valid, and consistent data for the remainder of the year and in the future.
- Some data for IEP students might be incomplete as the beginning of year assessments may not have included new students.

Science:

- Discussed what does investigations refer to (hands-on experiments).
- Teachers were asked to provide information on how many investigations were done in each period of measurement, rather than growth of skills.
- The group noticed a lot of differences across the grades in how many investigations were done.

Math:

- The beginning of year data was quite low for SWD and ELL as many did not complete or submit the assessments. This makes it appear that the growth stats are very large, but the positive side of this is that it shows an increase in student engagement since it means more students are submitting their assessments.

Social-Emotional:

- Morning meeting (done once a week by Rachel and the rest of the time with main teachers) and advisory are being split – it can be hard to measure them equally.

7. **Review Updated Diversity Proposal**

The updated Diversity Proposal submitted last year had been circulated to the SLT in advance of the meeting.

The SLT discussed the following:

- How are we going to do outreach? Daniel said we can do outreach as we see fit (and there is a flyer being prepared by the DOE with some key facts).
- We should get the Diversity Committee going so we can have them start to think about an outreach plan.
- We should consider having a special SLT meeting to consider proposed outreach efforts from the Committee and then determine a way forward.
- Concerns were raised around the primary mode of application being online, which may continue to exclude families without resources.
- How do we make sure the robust accommodations (PD, enrichment, social-emotional etc) from the Diversity Initiative proposal stay in place next year, since we don't know what is coming next year or how the diversity proposal will be applied this year, or even in the future.
- We may need to consider the Diversity Committee doing work in two phases – how to address outreach now, and then secondly, what other barriers to entry are there (eg, school transport) that we need to solve for.

The SLT discussed having Sonita do another outreach to the broader community to see if more parents would like to join the Diversity Committee. The SLT also discussed the importance of having SLT members also join the Committee so there is a strong connection between the Committee's work and the SLT.

8. **New SLT Meeting Dates**

The new SLT meeting dates previously agreed are March 25th, April 15th, May 27th, June 10th and June 16th. SLT members will re-confirm availability and revert if there are any issues.

9. **Reports**

All reports were submitted in advance of the meeting and taken as read. Full reports are attached as Appendices to these minutes. Any updates to those reports (discussed in the meeting today) are outlined below:

a. Principal Report – Appendix 1

No additional updates.

b. UFT Report - Appendix 2

No additional updates.

c. PTA Report - Appendix 3

No additional updates.

10. Parking Lot: Questions & Comments

A question was raised on whether there are any updates on the standardized testing process.

Sonita said she is waiting for more guidelines, but they have been told it is probably happening so they should get ready. The school has the dates but are awaiting guidelines on how it will be administered.

11. Next steps

The next SLT meeting is on March 25th.

Before that, we should get the Diversity Committee up and running – Sonita will send out another reminder to the Q300 parent community to make sure all interested parties are signed up for the Committee. The SLT meeting on March 25th (or a special meeting may be called sooner than that) will be used to get an update from the Diversity Committee and the SLT can review options for outreach.

12. Adjournment

Appreciations were shared around;

- The SLT's commitment and engagement and good dialogue
- The sharing of the student assessments and progress, and how much work goes into that process by the teachers and staff
- It was great to hear ideas about how we can further engage and support our students to connect more

The meeting was adjourned at 7.47pm.

APPENDIX 1 – Principal’s report – FEBRUARY 24, 2021 SLT**Staffing update:**

Our ENL provider has taken a leave of absence until after spring break. Our ATR assigned to our school will be working to provide ENL services to our ELL students.

Building updates:

Our Upper Division building opens on February 25th. All in-person students will need to provide consent to COVID testing before arriving on the first day. We are working with families to ensure this is a smooth process. We are excited to bring our 5th graders back into their classrooms at the Upper Division. Thank you to the teachers and families for being flexible during the switch.

G & T update:

Over the break the DOE announced that March 8, students in pre-kindergarten will be able to submit a request form to get a seat in gifted and talented Kindergarten programs. For families with children entering first, second, and third grades in fall 2021: Offers to G&T programs will be made to children from last year’s G&T waitlists. The DOE will not be accepting new applications for these seats.

Please view the link here: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/gifted-and-talented>.

We have also created a banner on our website: <http://www.ps300q.org/>

5-day a week students:

Beginning March 1st our current in-person Kindergarten students and students with disabilities who are at risk will be coming back to school for in-person classes 5 days a week. Even though this is something we would love to offer more students, at this time due to classroom capacity and social distancing guidelines, we are unable to do so. We will continue to revisit spacing and capacity as the year continues.

Students opting back into blended learning:

The last opportunity to opt-in for blended learning was in November as mentioned by the Chancellor. The school has been receiving many requests from parents to opt their child back into blended learning. Currently we are at max seating capacity in most grades. Students will be placed on a waitlist if a parent has requested this. Once a seat becomes available, parents will be notified. Students should continue to follow their remote schedules until parents have received confirmation of a cohort change. Please note there is no guarantee that an in-person seat will open up however the school will try its best to accommodate families.

Parent teacher conferences:

March 3rd (evening-4:30pm-7:00pm) and March 4th (afternoon: 1:00pm-3:00pm) will be Q300's parent teacher conferences. Please sign up to meet with your child's teacher. All links were emailed by Jenny Lando on Monday, February 25.

Lastly, as you know there have been multiple community conversations held over the past couple of weeks. Some on the PTA level, some on the DOE level and some at tea with the PC. It is very clear that our community has different feelings on G & T admissions. It is our job as SLT members to listen and bring these thoughts back to the group to share. We may not be all in agreement on everything but I know we all stand for inclusion, equity and supporting our Q300 students. A group of four 8th families wrote a letter to share their thoughts which they have shared with the community.

APPENDIX 2 – UFT report – FEBRUARY 24, 2021 SLT

1. Teacher Expectations: Please make sure you are checking Google Classroom with your child before emailing teachers asking what your child's grade is or what assignments your child is missing. There are some students who run errands with their parents during class and sign into Zoom from the street.

2. COVID Testing in Schools: After immediate pushback from the UFT, the state Education Department revised its Feb. 16 guidance barring schools from requiring student consent for COVID-19 testing as a condition for in-person learning. It was made clear that New York City would not be able to safely continue in-person learning without our mandatory in-person testing program in place in schools. Under the amended guidelines, New York City can maintain its aggressive testing regimen and help ensure the safety of students, staff and their families. As a reminder, no middle school student will be allowed to stay in school for in-person learning without a consent form signed by their parent or guardian. Twenty percent of all in-person students and staff in all open school buildings will be randomly tested on a weekly basis.

Please notify the school about COVID cases and/or exposure. Some teachers are finding out about some of those instances accidentally because a student happens to mention something.

APPENDIX 3 – PTA report – FEBRUARY 24, 2021 SLT**1. PTA Enrichment/Funding Update**

- In the Lower Division, the PTA funded virtual arts residency with Arts Connection for grades K-4, which began Jan 18 and will run until Mid-March. Further work with Arts Connection is under discussion beyond March.
- We continue to work with the administration as per the possibility of scheduling other enrichments for both the Upper and Lower Division.
- 52 Chromebooks that were backordered finally arrived; the school will purchase an additional 69 more chromebooks from various PTA funds.
- Several funds will be applied for professional development for teacher training in Responsive Classroom this spring.

2. Upcoming Events

- Annual Zumbathon with PS 17: This year will be a fundraiser for Astoria Food Pantry and Astoria mutual Aid. March 19th at 5:30 pm on Zoom.
- Parent led craft events
 - Chinese New Year Crafts. Saturday, February 27, 5:30
 - Youtube Paper Craft by Amy He and her daughter Stephanie. link to be shared in March bulletin
 - Lassi-making event in honor of Holi. March Date TBA
- **Lower Division Representatives: K-2 scavenger hunt March 7** 4pm stay tuned for grade level flyer and how to join. Sponsored for free by Shibley Day Camp.
- **Upper Division Reps:** Organizing a scavenger hunt
- Potential Events TBD:
 - Earth Day event
 - Spring fitness (virtual run) in April or May
 - Drive in movie in late April
 - Virtual Auction in May
 - Broadway actor event

3. Community Conversation

Thank you to the 48 parents who were able to participate in a PTA led community conversation on February 10. Community members shared their voices regarding current enrollment changes to the elementary school for next year. The purpose of the meeting was to seek common ground, and share ideas about how to move forward. The feedback has been shared with our administration (anonymously). We continue to encourage parents with more specific questions to contact the Superintendent's or Chancellor's office. The PTA is considering hosting a second discussion in the coming month.

4. **Appreciations**

- LifeLine Foods events: Our Virtual Family Cooking Class and Fundraiser with Lifeline Groceries. The kickback was about \$300 for Q300 and much more for Lifeline!
- Trivia Night in January. Was great fun! We raised over \$600 too.
- Direct Appeal has raised

5. **Community Affairs**

- One School Building Update: Members of the One School Committee have been with local electeds to explain why we need our own building.
- Parents attend the Reso-A workshop for PTAs sponsored by the Boro president