



## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • September 28, 2017

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### A. In Attendance

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It was noted that (a) parents and other “persons in a parental relation” as defined by the regulations of the New York City Chancellor and designated persons having a relationship to a child or children currently attending Q300 (the “**Parents**”) and (b) eligible Q300 teachers and instructional staff members who are currently employed on a full-time basis (the “**Staff**”) at Q300 were present. The total number of Parents and Staff (together, the **Members**”) present was 26.

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### B. Call to Order, Ice Breaker, and Serious Fun Presentation

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Co-PTA President Maria Hantzopoulos and Margarita Soto called the meeting of the General Membership of the Q300 Parent-Teacher Association (the “**PTA**”) to order at 6:30 pm in the cafeteria in the lower division campus.

Maria and Margarita led an ice breaker in which attendees met in pairs to share one thing that the attendee’s student is excited about school.

Serious Fun Site Director Ronald Velez introduced Serious Fun, which provides fee-for-service afterschool programming at the lower division campus. He noted that another organization, Sports and Arts in School Foundation (“**SASF**”) is beginning a free after school program for Public School 17 students only. The SASF program has limited enrollment and requires that participants have a 90% attendance rate.

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### C. Approval of Minutes

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The minutes of the General Meetings held on January 27, 2017 and February 16, 2017 were presented. A motion was made to approve such minutes. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the minutes.

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### D. President’s Report

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Maria and Margarita gave the President’s report. The following are highlights:

1. They shared PTA’s mission statement. The mission is to enrich and improve the educational, emotional, and social lives of Q300’s students by providing the following:
  - a. Supporting activities that foster the core values of Q300: Inclusion, Inquiry and Responsibility;
  - b. Providing support and resources to Q300 for the benefit and educational growth of its students;

- c. Developing parent and staff leadership, fostering and encouraging participation at all levels of the Association, and providing opportunities to participate in school governance and decision making;
  - d. Promoting a cooperative working relationship among the Q300 parents, families, staff, and administration; and
  - e. Providing a forum where parents and staff members discuss innovations and implementations of curricular and extra-curricular activities that afford each student an opportunity to acquire the core values of Q300.
2. Board Members, who were present at the meeting, were introduced.
  3. The following PTA funded programs are up and running, including:
    - a. Teaching assistants for the lower division;
    - b. Ten-week visual arts residency by Art House Astoria for kindergarten through fourth grades;
    - c. Ten-week dance residency by Alvin Ailey for grades 3rd, 4th, and 6th-8th grades;
    - d. Ten-week architecture residency by the Center for Architecture for 2nd grade;
    - e. Year-long music program for the lower (K-4th) and upper divisions (6th-8th grades);
    - f. Video production (6th-8th grades);
    - g. Supplemental funding for all upper division enrichment clubs; and
    - h. Chrome books and robotics kits for upper division.
  4. Over the years, members of the PTA has successfully advocated for discretionary government funds from local elected officials for the following projects:
    - a. 2014-15: IS 126 playground upgrades, valued at \$250,000 from City Council Member Costa Constantinides (FY 2015);
    - b. 2015-17: Reso A funding for new upper division science lab, valued at \$500,000, from City Council Member Constantinides and Queens Borough President Melinda Katz (FY 2018);
    - c. 2016-17: discretionary funding for technology including Promethean Smart Boards at both campuses and chrome books in the lower division), valued at \$60,000, from City Council Member Constantinides and Queens Borough President Katz (FY 2017)
    - d. 2017-18: The following upper division projects were funded by State Assembly Member Aravella Simotas: auditorium upgrades valued at \$265,000, bathroom upgrades, valued at \$85,000, and classroom divider wall, valued at \$10,000 (FY 2018)
  5. Recent and Upcoming Events
    - a. **Read-a-thon Update.** The Summer Read-a-Thon raised over \$10,000. The first grade had the highest participation rate in the lower division; the sixth grade had the highest participation rate in the upper division. Both grades will have a pizza party.
    - b. **New York International Children's Film Festival.** The PTA raised \$600 from proceeds from the New York Children's Festival.
    - c. **My Little Pony Filmraiser.** If you purchase tickets for the opening weekend (October 6, 7, and 8) of the film My Little Pony, the Q300 PTA will receive 10% of profit generated from those purchases. The PTA will circulate the website to purchase tickets.
    - d. **Tea Collection Fundraiser (Mid-October).** Every purchase made through the TeaSchoolDays.com website (not their regular website!) will save you 15% off your purchase. Q300 will also receive 15% of your purchase as a donation from the company. To receive your personal discount and the donation to the PTA, use code SDF17Q300. The promotion runs from October 9-16th.
    - e. **Q300 Chess Tournament. Oct. 15, 2017.** NY Chess Kids will be hosting a chess tournament at the lower division campus.
    - f. **Picture Day, October 17, 2017.** The PTA will receive a portion of the proceeds from the sales of pictures from the upcoming Picture Day.

- g. **Costume Party on Sunday, October 29 from 3- 5pm.** Our annual costume party is a fun-filled event for the whole family! If you are interested in joining the planning committee, please email membership@Q300pta.org.
- h. **Gallery Night on Friday, November 10. Save the date!** This evening fundraising event is a chance for parents and other adults in the Q300 community to socialize over wine and light food at an art gallery in Chelsea. More details coming soon.

6. Q300 Appreciations.

- a. **Q300 Informal Picnic at Rainey Park on August 26, 2017.** Over 70 families attended as well as Principal Bill Biniaris, and many of the teachers, staff, and community partners. Thanks to Micki Spiller, Tom Murphy, James Huang, Meghan Cirrito, Joanna Holzman, Maria Hantzopoulos, David Wang, Maria Carrasco, and many others for their work in making the event a success. Special thanks to Sarah Willett-Chang, Siobhan Watson, and Pooja O’Hanlon for coordinating the event, Maria Carrasco for coordinating the tabling, and David Wang for organizing the Uniform Swap.
- b. **Private Bus Service.** Thanks to Catherine Leopando, Melissa Berger, Ellie Rabinovich, Michael Rosner, Sarah Willett-Chang, Laura Marks, Sonal Ross, and others for coordinating the private bus to and from school. to Amanda Spielman for coordinating the Serious Fun/Global Kids after school bus.
- c. **Mulee School Delivery.** Thanks to Catherine Leopando, Alexis Lin, Eileen Yim, Li Wong, Vivian and Eve Sicherman, Nelly Tavarez, Richa Dhekne, Sally Mehreteab, Ellie Rabinovich, Maria Carrasco, and Q300 parent coordinator, Dora Fiotodimitrakis for helping to deliver the school supplies at both campuses. Thanks to David Wang, and Sarah Willett-Chang for coordinating.
- f. **Upper Division Science Lab.** Queens Borough President Melinda Katz has designated \$500,000 to Q300’s middle school for a new science lab. Many thanks to Margarita Soto and Lynn Kennedy, who coordinated the efforts this past year in advocating for the science lab, including meeting with various elected officials; Andrea Tappert, who coordinated a letter-writing and petition campaign the year before, and for all community members who pushed for the science lab.
- g. **New Victory Theater.** Many thanks to Monica Mohan for securing a partnership with the New Victory Theater. More details from the school will be coming soon.
- h. **Enrichment Committee.** Many thanks to Anne Van der, Maura McDermott, and others on the enrichment committee for all their hard work in researching enrichment programs for the school.

#### D. Treasurer’s Report

Co-Treasurer Sue Sekar circulated the attached Treasurer’s Report, which summarizes the PTA’s finances as of August 31, 2017. The PTA raised \$16,858.52. The PTA’s expenditures included paying for a portion of the teaching assistant salaries, school supplies and teacher professional development, and certain enrichment programs. The PTA had an adjusted cash balance of nearly \$126,200 as of August 31, 2017.

Sue provided an analysis of the 2016-2017 PTA budget. She noted that the PTA pays for academic enrichment programs, lower division teaching assistants, and other school needs. Last year, the PTA diversified its fundraising by introducing a gift card fundraiser. This year, the PTA will hold raffles.

Sue noted that at the June meeting, the PTA amended its proposed 2017-2018 budget so that \$80,000 would be used to help the school pay for the salary of a social worker position. However, due to changes in Q300 personnel over the summer, the PTA is proposing to change its budget (see below) so that such amount will be used instead to pay for teaching assistant salaries and other budget items.

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## **E. School Leadership Team (“SLT”) Report**

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SLT parent member Monica Mohan gave highlights from the SLT meeting, held on September 19, 2017, including the following: Principal Bill Biniaris is planning to hire integrated co-teaching teachers in the middle school.

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## **F. Communications Committee**

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Co-Vice President of Communications Matt Schaefer noted that the communications committee publishes a newsletter, maintains the PTA website, and other projects.

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## **G. Membership Committee**

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Co-Vice President of Membership Siobhan Watson noted that the membership committee encourages participation in school events and is spearheading an in-school volunteering program.

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## **H. Co-President, Upper Division**

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Co-Vice President, Upper Division Anne Van der Veer, who is an eighth grade parent, explained that her role is provide support and resources to the upper division. She is organizing the appointment of class parents for each class, helping the school organize the middle school open houses. She is very much interested in getting new families more involved in the school.

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## **I. Community Affairs Committee**

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Vice President of Community Affairs Lynn Kennedy explained that the community affairs committee helps connect Q300 with the community. The committee would like to invite elected officials to visit the school. It helps put Q300 initiatives in the New York City participatory budget process. It also is working with the one school committee to advocate for the siting of Q300 in one school. (Currently Q300 is located in two buildings that are several blocks apart.) Finally, the community affairs committee is organizing a group of grants writers to help bring corporate and foundation money to the school.

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## **J. Fundraising Committee**

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Vice President of Fundraising Kevin Gallagher stated that the fundraising committee coordinates the Direct Appeal campaign and various fundraisers. Upcoming fundraisers include Gallery Night on Friday, November 10. He noted that the PTA will be holding raffles, a gift card fundraising program, and an arts fundraiser in which kids’ artwork is placed on mugs and other items.

Direct Appeal Campaign Chairperson David Wang provided an overview of the campaign. The Direct Appeal accounts for over 77% of the net amounts raised by the PTA. Nearly 100% of the money raised goes directly to help cover the funding gap between the cost of the enriched education that Q300 kids receive and government funding. The gaps are due to (i) the Department of Education does not provide extra funding for Q300’s gifted and talented status; (ii) Q300 does not receive Federal Title I funds; and Q300 is not fully funded as a K-8<sup>th</sup> grade school, as it does not have a 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The Direct Appeal pays for enrichment programs for the entire school, teaching assistants in the lower division, and other critical priorities that enriches students’ experiences at Q300.

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## K. Principal's Report

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Principal Bill Biniaris gave the Principal's Report. The following are highlights:

1. Anna Mionakis has been appointed to serve as Assistant Principal. Her predecessor Kristina Jelinick has been appointed Interim Acting Principal at a Manhattan school.
2. Lower Division (Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> Grades)
  - a. Q300 has hired six PTA-funded teaching assistants for the lower division, with 1 more expected to be hired shortly.
  - b. The PTA-funded ten-week visual arts residency by Art House Astoria for kindergarten through fourth grades has begun.
  - c. In-class chess program will begin shortly.
  - d. The ten-week dance residency by Alvin Ailey for grades 3rd and 4th grades have been approved.
  - e. The non-profit group Asphalt Green is running activities during recess twice a week.
  - f. The Promethean smart boards have been set up in the lower and upper divisions.
  - g. With regard to drop-off in the mornings, Principal Bill requested that students use the 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance, instead of the 29<sup>th</sup> Street entrance, when they arrive between 7:45 am and 8:05 am. He noted that the 29<sup>th</sup> Street entrance is very congested during this time period. After 8:05 am, students may use the 29<sup>th</sup> Street entrance.
  - h. As noted below, technology teacher Ali Lisberger has been temporarily re-assigned from the lower to the upper division. In her place, substitute teacher Ms. Harvey has been teaching technology at the lower division campus using Ali's curriculum.
3. Upper Division (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades)
  - a. Q300 has hired many new teachers, including a Spanish teacher and arts teacher. Students have three advisory periods per week (MWF). The advisory groups are heterogeneous and are not based on grade level.
  - b. Upper division students are participating in electives. They include robotics, memory makers (scrap booking), global awareness; story telling, student government, and chess. Afterschool activities include debate.
  - c. The upper division is starting a junior honor society.
  - d. Thanks State Assembly Member Simotas for the auditorium upgrades, bathroom upgrades, and classroom divider wall.
  - e. Upper division students self-dismiss at the end of the school day, unless parents specifically request otherwise.
  - f. The deadline to register for the specialized high school is October 12, 2017.
  - g. Given the staffing changes during the summer, the school is seeking to fill ICT positions in the upper division. Technology teacher Ali Lisberger, who is a certified special education teacher, has been temporarily re-assigned from the lower to the upper division in order to fill one of those positions. Bill hopes that this issue gets resolved quickly and that Ali is transferred back to the lower division.
  - h. In response to a question, Bill acknowledged that it is difficult for parents to reach the administration at the upper division. He noted that the phone system is antiquated at the upper division camp and that they are working on revamping the phone system. In the meantime, Bill suggested that parents should call the lower division phone number. The lower division staff can connect the parents to the upper division administration.
  - i. Secretary Sharon Murphy has been reassigned from the lower division to the upper division.

#### 4. School-wide Issues

- a. Assistant Principal Anna is serving as the point person to review the individualized education program at the school. She is developing what additional approaches the school can use for early intervention, teaching techniques, and other issues.
- b. Q300 has started a school-wide cabinet, with teachers from both lower and upper divisions. The cabinet seeks to give more responsibilities to the staff.
- c. Ericka Ball is the chair at Q300 on Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 issues. The section protects students with disabilities against discrimination by requiring public schools to provide eligible students reasonable and appropriate accommodations, so they may participate fully in school.
- d. Q300 will be using [www.pupilpath.com](http://www.pupilpath.com) to provide information about student's education. The website will allow parents to view their child's assignments and projects along with due dates, their child's performance in each class, progress reports, and other information. The school will be sending log-in info to parents.

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#### L. Resolution

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1. **Nominations Committee.** A resolution was made in support of the formation of a nomination committee for the October elections for offices including the Vice President for Community Affairs; Co-Vice President, Lower Division; and Co-Vice President, Upper Division. The nomination committee would consist of Paula Marisi, Ryoko Mathes, and Harold Overweg. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.

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#### L. New Business

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1. The Members discussed the standard for addressing teachers. Principal Bill has let each teacher decide how he or she should be addressed. Some teachers prefer to have their students address them by their first names; others ask to be referred to with a title of "Mr. or Ms." with either their first or last name.
2. Several parents preferred to have students address their teachers by their first names. They noted that there is mutual respect when teachers and students address each other by their first names. One teacher stated that his authority in the classroom stems not from how he is addressed, but rather from respect about how he does his job and his expertise as a teacher.
3. Other parents noted that using a title conveys authority and respect and that once the students leave Q300, they will likely have to address adults with title.
4. Several parents would like to have a school-wide standard for addressing teachers. One noted that parents are confused about how to address teachers.
5. Others noted that the policy under the previous administration was to address teachers by their first name and that now that this change in policy may denote a change in the philosophy of the school.
6. Principal Bill expressed appreciation about the parents' concerns.
  - a. There was no new business.
  - b. Question: what is the standard for salutation – bill is not each teacher has there own. Some kids have an issue; it really bothers eome kids; there is a mutual respect to be on a first name basis; there is a little bit ; there are not peer; Maria is thinking that it is confusin; some wouldn't; folsk are quite confused; older ones seem are confused; anne – each person's automooous choice; there should be a standard;
  - c. Alex- perception of what authority comes; it comes from my doing a good job; when they show me respect; authority can come from expertise
  - d. Ellie: parents are confusing; who to call what; what does that say; they are making assumption that the school is changing; we need to communicate that

- e. Margarita: my son – her rationale was flawed – it never was an issue for using the last name
- f. What about outside the school environment?
- g. Bill – I have not sense this issue; this is how I feel now.
- h. Last year we used Jupiter eds – data exchange; we are going with a new platform; eteacher put grades and comments;
- i. Google classroom – middle school teachers are sharing; last year stopped used to emails; there were not evidence; not conducive to learning; in class;
- j. Some students have outside email accounts; upload and download folders.
- k. Erica will take a few more things to Giniaris's

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## **M. Next Meeting and Adjournment**

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The March General Meeting will be held on Thursday, October 19, 2017 at 6:30 pm in the **upper division campus**.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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Gina Reis, Co-Secretary

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David William Wang, Co-Secretary