



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • January 16, 2019

A. In Attendance

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 15.

B. Call to Order

Co-Presidents Julissa McHugh and Paula Marisi called the General Membership of the Q300 PTA Association to order at 6:45 pm in the auditorium at the lower division campus at 28-37 29th Street, Astoria, NY 11102.

C. Co-Presidents’ Report

Co-Presidents Julissa McHugh and Paula Marisi gave the President’s report. The following are the highlights:

1. Please sign up for the annual International Winterfest Potluck, which will held on January 25, 2019. It’s a great opportunity for the community to come together and really get to know one another. Thanks to Maria Hantzopoulos, Barbara Monroe, Sue Sekar, Codou Ndiour, Sara Clough, and the committee for their hard work. Special thanks to Amanda Spielman for the beautiful flyer.
 2. The following is the latest information concerning PTA-funded enrichment programs and supplies:
 - a. Video and animation elective for the upper division has begun.
 - b. The year-long K-5th grade music programs continues.
 - c. Upper division enrichment clubs, in which the PTA funds supplies, continue.
 - d. The following programs will shortly begin (i) K-1st grade visual arts provided by Art House Astoria; (ii) 2nd grade architecture provided by the Center for Architecture; and (iii) 3rd and 4th grade dance provided by the Alvin Ailey Dance Dance Theater.
 3. Please volunteer to help publish the PTA’s newsletter. Please contact communications@q300pta.org.
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D. Co-Treasurers’ Report

A summary of the Co-Treasurer’s Report was made. Attached is a copy of summary of the PTA’s finances for December 2018. In December 2019, the PTA raised over \$63,000, which includes \$59,000 from the Direct Appeal. Outflows were \$6,000, which includes enrichment program payments.

F. Committee Reports

1. **Membership.** Co-Vice President for Membership Maria Hantzopoulos noted that the Winterfest Potluck is coming up on January 25, 2019 at the lower division campus. The PTA needs help in organizing student activities and in soliciting auction item such as summer camp spots. Families are encouraged to wear clothing from their heritage or culture. The Winterfest auction website is live. Please bid on summer camp spots and any items. The membership committee also is organizing the purchase of school supplies for the fall 2019 and is updating grade contact lists. Finally, the joint Q300 PTA and PS 17 PTA Zumba-thon fundraiser will be held on April 5, 2019.

2. **Fundraising.** Co-Vice President of Fundraising Claire Lui asked for volunteers to help solicit auction items from local businesses for the 5th annual Stepping into Summer Auction. The PTA website has auction solicitation letter templates. Further, please consider donating a tour or a meal as auction items. Direct Appeal chair David Wang reported that the Direct Appeal has thus far raised USD \$195,000. Thanks to all those who have donated. The PTA is organizing its “31 Days for Q300” in March to help raise the family participation rate for the Direct Appeal, which is the PTA’s primary fundraiser. So far, the participation rate is 35%. In previous years, the participation rate has been an average of 65% by the end of the school year.
3. **Lower and Upper Division Report.** Each grade is organizing activity tables for the Winterfest Potluck. They include origami, soap-making, and other activities.
4. **Communications.** The PTA will add Q300 chess team events to its website. A committee is updating the Q300 website. Recent additions include social-emotional learning info and a photo gallery.
5. **Community Affairs.** The following are highlights. Q300 has submitted the following Resolution A capital projects for consideration by the City Council and the Queens Borough President: (a) technology purchases; (b) a proposal for a library for Q300 and its co-located partner PS 17; and (c) air conditioning for the upper division auditorium. The grants committee continues to identify foundations, corporations, and other potential funders. The one school committee is seeking Queens-based location to relocate Q300 into 1 site. Please consider volunteering as a neighborhood liaison to serve as a point person to organize local Q300 events. Community Affairs is helping form a Wellness Council, which would help strengthen physical and health education programs and to propose health and wellness initiatives. The community affairs committee is looking for volunteers to interview Q300 alumni about their Q300 subsequent high school experiences. Further, the committee is seeking volunteers to serve as a coach or referee for the first annual Upper Division basketball tournament on 3/22.
6. **Chess Update.** Parent Luke Lukose gave update on the chess team. The next Q300 tournament will be held on February 10. He encouraged students to participate in the 52nd New York State Scholastic Championships on March 9-10, 2019 in Saratoga Springs.

G. School Leadership Team (“SLT”) Report

The next SLT meeting will be held on January 28, 2019 at 5:30 pm in the lower division campus.

H. Principal’s Report

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

1. At the end of the last school year, the Q300 established a special education committee consisting of parents, teachers, and administrations. The committee’s goal is to ensure that students with an individualized educational plans (“**IEP**”) (helps ensure that a child who has a disability receives specialized instruction and related services) are fully welcomed and empowered in the school.
2. In January, the committee conducted a survey of sixth through eighth grade students with IEPs. The survey’s goal was to get an understanding about how these students viewed their IEP and about what takes place at the school. Guidance counselor Christine Katartzis coordinated the development of the survey. The committee received parental permission to conduct the survey. 14 students participated in the survey.
3. Parent Laura Marks shared the following survey results:
 - a. 71.4% of respondents knew that they had an IEP; 28.6% were not sure.
 - b. 21.4% of respondents were not sure about the classification (e.g., speech or language impairment, autism, hearing impairment, learning disability, and other health impairment) on their IEPs. The others indicated what they believed their classification is, which may not have corresponded to the classification listed in their IEP.
 - c. 57% of respondents stated that it was very important or somewhat important for others to know about their classification on their IEPs. 28.6% of respondents stated that it was not so important. 14.3% stated that it was not important.
 - d. 42.9% of respondents stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that some things in school are harder because of their classification on their IEPs. 14.3% strongly agreed with the statement. 21.4% agreed with the statement. 14.3% disagreed. 7.1% strongly disagreed.

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- e. 57.1% of respondents are aware of who attends and participates in their IEP meetings. 42.9% were not sure. (The IEP meeting, required by federal statute, is convened at least once a school year to plan an educational program that is tailored to the needs of each child. The child's "team" attends the meeting: teachers, therapists, parents, school administrators, and any other invited parties).
- f. 57.1% of respondents are aware of how often IEP meetings are held. 35% were not sure. The remaining were not aware.
- g. 60% of respondents have participated in previous IEP meetings.
- h. 42.9% of respondents would like to participate in future IEP meetings. 50% stated that they were maybe interested in participating. The remaining were not interested in participating.
- i. 50% of respondents were neutral about the statement, "I feel that it's important for me to part of my IEP meeting." 14.3% strongly agreed with the statement. 28.6% agreed with the statement. 7.1% strongly disagreed with the statement.
- j. 50% of respondents were neutral about the statement, "I am comfortable discussing my classification with my teachers. 14.3% strongly agreed with the statement. 21.4% agreed with the statement. 14.3% disagreed with the statement.
- k. 57.1% of respondents were comfortable discussing their classification with their peers. 14.3% were very comfortable. 28.6% were not so comfortable.
- l. 61.5% of respondents sometimes let their teacher know how they learn best and what helps them learn best. 15.4% almost all the time let their teacher know. 23.1% almost never let their teacher know.
- m. 42.9% of respondents stated that they get individualized attention in class from their teacher, they feel somewhat comfortable. 7.1% felt extremely comfortable. 21.4% felt very comfortable. 7.2% felt not so comfortable. 21.4% felt not at all comfortable.
- n. 71.4% of respondents stated that their accommodations are always available when they need them. 29.6 % stated that their accommodations are sometimes available.
- o. 28.6% of respondents stated that they almost never have trouble with organization. 28.6% stated that they once in a while have trouble with organization. 28.6% stated that they sometimes have trouble with organization. 7.1% stated that they almost all the time have trouble with organization.
- p. Students indicated all the accommodations that they presently have. (A respondent may check more than 1 accommodations). Please note that this may not be correspond to the listed accommodation in their IEP. The following is a list of accommodations and the number of responses for each accommodation:
 - (i) Use of assistive technology: 4 responses
 - (ii) Use of graphic organizer: 5 responses
 - (iii) Have seating in front of class: 6 responses
 - (iv) Extended time on tests: 14 responses
 - (v) Take test in a separate location: 10 responses
 - (vi) Have test/directions read to me: 7 responses
 - (vii) Other: 1
- q. The respondents were asked to list the kinds of supports that would be helpful to them that they don't presently have. 6 of the respondents answered. Most respondents noted that the question was not applicable and no or none. One noted, "If I work on a little more work."
- r. 35.7% of respondents noted that they almost never have trouble managing their time. 21.4% noted that they once in a while have trouble managing time. 35.7% noted sometimes they have trouble managing time. 7.1% noted that they almost all of the time have trouble managing time.
- s. 60% of respondents noted that hey almost never have trouble with transition (moving from one activity to another) or a sudden change to their schedule. 7% had trouble once in a while. 33 had trouble sometimes.
- t. 92.9% of respondents noted that they almost never feel that others treat them differently because they have an IEP. 7.1% stated that they almost all the time feel that others treat them differently because they have an IEP.
- u. 30.8% of respondents felt included almost all the time in their peer group. 38.5% felt included frequently in their peer group. 23.1% felt included once in a while. 7.7% felt included almost never.
- v. Students indicated all persons who they would go to if they felt that they need help. (A respondent may check more than 1 individual). The following is a list of individuals and the number of responses for each person:
 - (aa) teacher/service provider: 8
 - (bb) guidance counselor: 7
 - (cc) classmate: 8
 - (dd) friend: 6
 - (ee) parent: 8
 - (ff) relative: 4

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4. Laura stated that it is important that students with IEPs take responsibility for shaping and structuring their IEPs and to be their own advocates. She noted that at the next committee meeting, which will be held on February 12, 2019, the committee will focus on lower division students. Principal Biniaris stated that the school wants to improve student's advocacy for themselves so that they can continue to advocate when they are in high school.
5. Principal Biniaris noted that all students, not just students with IEPs, should understand what IEPs are.
6. A parent stated that because class size has grown, students may have less individualized attention. Accordingly, it is even more important that students are assessed about whether they have a disability so that they can be provided the necessary support and services. This would also help teachers manage the class. Principal Biniaris noted that the assessment process takes time. The assessment helps ensure that the student gets the right services.
7. A parent expressed appreciation for the work of the special education committee and that upper division students were assessed for IEP or 504 plans before the start of this school year.
8. Principal Biniaris noted that social worker Rachel Weiss started work yesterday and will be attending the Winterfest. She will work in the lower division campus, serve a load of mandated student cases, provide services to "at-risk" students, teaches social-emotional lessons, and provide guidance to teachers on such issues. She will coordinate her efforts with social emotional learning coordinator Edwin Mora, who will continue to provide social-emotional learning sessions on Fridays in the lower division. The goal is for either Rachel or Edwin to visit each lower division class at least once a week.
9. Assistant Principal Anna Milonakis has returned from parental leave on a part-time basis. A 3rd grade teacher will be returning from parental leave shortly. The lower division technology teacher will take parental leave in the Spring. Principal Biniaris noted that he will try to have substitute teachers "shadow" the teacher who plans to take a leave, prior to such a leave.
10. A committee composed of administrators, teachers, and parents continues to interview candidates to replace the first grade teacher who left at the beginning of January. The administration is interviewing candidates for the newly PTA funded fifth grade teaching assistant ("TA") position and to fill a first grade TA position, as one of the first grade TA recently for a job opportunity.
11. Principal Biniaris stated that the marking period ends on January 17, 2019; reports cards will be coming out shortly thereafter.
12. Principal Biniaris reminded parents to communicate any unexpected dismissal changes as early as possible and no later than 1:00 pm on the day of the dismissal change. He also requested that students stop jumping over the gate into the garden area in the lower division school yard.
13. Principal Biniaris clarified the NYC Department of Education lice policy. He explained that if the school does a head check and discovers lice on a student, then the affected student's parents as well as the parents of the rest of the class are notified. If the school finds only nits (lice eggs) on a student, then only the parents of the affected student are informed. He will consider whether to change the policy so that the entire class is informed about the discovery of nits.
14. A parent asked about whether or not any teachers are selecting a class "student of the month" and if so, whether or not, such program aligns with Q300's core value of inclusion. Principal Biniaris stated that at least one teacher has such a program. Principal Biniaris wants to support the teacher's practices and that many schools have "student of the month" programs. He has not banned the program at Q300 and will not do so, unless there are indications that such a program does not serving students.
15. A parent noted that the designation of a particular student should be based on a criteria that is conveyed to the students. In one class that has "student of the month", the teacher seems to have chosen a student based on a changing criteria. Also, only ten students can be selected per school year.
16. Several parents proposed alternative programs. A parent noted that in a second grade class, each student is asked to give a compliment to a student of the week. This is in line with Q300's core value of inclusion, as all students have a chance to be a student of the week and that it helps build community. A former Q300 teacher encouraged good behavior in his classroom by giving a student a marble/ball for each good work. The marble/ball would be placed in a communal jar.

Once the jar was filled by all the marble/balls, the class would get “free time” on a Friday as a reward for working together. Principal Biniaris stated that he will continue to speak with teachers about ways to acknowledge students without pitting them against one another.

I. Resolution

A motion was made to amend last month’s resolution for the hiring of a fifth grade TA to include a specific amount that would be allocated. The amendment is as follows: The PTA shall allocate USD \$10,000 for the hiring of a teaching assistant (“TA”) for the fifth grade. Such TA shall have studied education, have a teacher’s certification, or have substantial educational experience. A motion was made to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded. A majority of Members present approved the motion.

H. New Business

No new business.

J. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 pm. The next general membership meeting will be held on February 28, 2019 at 6:30 pm in the lower division campus.

/S/

M. Daniel Bach and David William Wang, Co-Secretaries