



Newsletter

May 2015

30th Avenue School - Q300 Parent-Teacher Association



Sixth Grade Model UN

By David Smith

On the 26th-28th of March, sixteen Q300 students took the challenge of solving some of the world's most complex and toughest problems. These sixth graders became UN delegates for the weekend to simulate the UN. All of the Q300 students attending represented Sierra Leone, but in various committees. These committees included UNICEF, UNEP, UN Women, ITU-WHO, WHO, The General Assembly, UNDP, and SOCHUM. The delegates in these committees discussed a wide range of topics, from eradicating poverty to access to vaccines. The delegates have spent the year preparing for the conference with Ms. Annette as their advisor. The preparation included writing position papers learning the rules of procedure, and lots and lots of research! The delegates even took a trip to the UN to gain more knowledge about how it operates. Then, the big conference came, and all of that practice would finally come into play.

The conference kicked off with its opening ceremonies on Thursday the 26th. The delegates, in their fancy suits and dresses, took the subway to Grand Central, checked in at the Grand Hyatt Hotel for the conference, and then walked, with other delegates, to the United Nations. The ceremony was held in the General Assembly Hall, the largest of its kind in the UN building. Since the Model UN team arrived early, the delegates were able to socialize with other members of their committee. This was also a great opportunity to learn about other countries viewpoints. The ceremony started shortly afterwards. Speeches were made by a few keynote speakers, including Penny Abeywardena, NYC's International Affairs Commissioner. There were also performances by two musicians who are part of UNA-USA, the organization that runs the Model UN

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Congratulations PRINCIPAL Matt!

Congratulations to Matt Willard on his appointment to the position of Q300 Principal! Prior to that, Matt had served as interim acting principal of the school. He had been selected through a process governed by Chancellor's Regulation C-30 (C-30 process). In December 2014, the Department of Education (DOE) posted the principal position on its website for candidates to apply. Dr. Composto selected and referred four candidates to a committee formed to interview candidates. On February 5, 2015, the committee, consisting of Q300 community members, including School Leadership Team (SLT) members, Q300 staff representatives and parents as well as PS 17 staff representatives from PS 17, met and developed interview questions. It then conducted group interviews of the candidates. Based on a scoring sheet, it provided its recommendation to Dr. Composto. After considering the committee's recommendations, Dr. Composto interviewed a number of candidates. At a meeting on May 8, 2015, Dr. Composto consulted with the SLT and then afterward announced his selection at the Teacher Appreciation breakfast that morning.





First Grade Updates

Science Notes

In science, students have continued their investigation on Insects. Students began with their first investigations on Mealworms. Students observed mealworms closely monitoring any changes with the mealworms. Each student received two mealworms where they set up its habitat ensuring that it had food, air, water, and space. The mealworms grew from a worm to a pupa and finally into a darkling beetle. We are waiting to see if eggs will be laid. We also observed wax worms. We also set up its habitat and each receiving two wax worms. Some of our wax worms survived passed the pupa stage while some did not. We observed changes with the wax worms. They changed from a wax worm to a pupa and we even have a few wax moths that have emerged. We will be transferring our wax moths into a new environment so that they could lay their eggs hopefully! Our final insect that we are observing is a painted lady caterpillar. Every student received a caterpillar. We looked at how each caterpillar changed into a chrysalis. We transferred our chrysalides into a butterfly habitat. Many of our chrysalides have turned into painted butterflies.

As scientists, we've been focused on taking detailed scientific observations and marking changes on our calendar. We have been really focused observing closely using a magnifying lens. We want to make sure we noticed segments, position of legs, antenna, and where the different body parts were located. Where is the abdomen? Where is the thorax? As we observed we posed questions such as the darkened wax worm pupa still alive or not?

Writing

In writing, students have been working on their poems. Students have learned different strategies in creating their poems. Students have learned from having a strategy modeled for them. Students have also learned a poetry strategy by doing some inquiry work into poems and naming what they noticed in the poems. In this unit, students began

observing different objects with a poet's eyes. The objects included pinecones, twigs, scissors, paper clips, pencil, leaf, shells, and buttons. In this unit, students have developed strategies around what poets do to write poems. Some of the major strategies we have addressed in this unit include:

- (1) Ways to make your poem have rhythm and song
- (2) How to convey strong feelings
- (3) How to allow the reader to picture what is being said
- (4) Trying our different voices

Overall, in this unit, students have been focused on trying out different strategies so that their poems can speak to their readers. Students are now in the process of getting their poems ready for our Poetry Café celebration on June 5th! In this final stretch, students will be revising their poems and creating illustrations to match their poems for a final publication. They will be practicing saying their poems aloud in class.

Math

We started a new math unit titled "Twos, Fives, and Tens."

In this unit, students will be focused on how to count and add up groups of objects. Students looked at things that come in twos. We created a list of different things that come in twos such as legs, arms, elbows, eyes, ears, etc. We also



Model UN continued

conference. After the ceremony wrapped up, the delegates travelled back to Q300 where their parents picked them up. The delegates then got a good nights rest to prepare for a long day of speeches, caucusing, and resolutions tomorrow.

Friday came next, and so did committee sessions. Students arrived at the Grand Hyatt in the morning and stayed there until 8:30 at night. Training sessions began at 10:00, and delegates had a valuable opportunity to practice and sharpen their skills. Then, at 11:30, committee sessions began. Countries gave opening speakers list speeches and began to learn more about each others viewpoints. This was a valuable point for delegates, as this is where blocs and alliances began to be created. At 1, committees broke for lunch, where Q300 delegates talked about their experiences in their first committee session.

The delegates, in their fancy suits and dresses, took the subway to Grand Central, checked in at the Grand Hyatt Hotel for the conference, and then walked, with other delegates, to the United Nations. The ceremony was held in the General Assembly Hall, the largest of its kind in the UN building.

At 2, committee session started again, and delegates began to continue forming blocs, formally debating in moderated caucuses, and drafting resolutions in unmoderated caucuses, or “unmods” as they are called in UN delegate lingo. After 3 hours of committee, resolutions had already been started and blocs had been formed. Once committee was over, the delegates took a quick walk to Times Square to go to the Hard Rock Cafe for dinner. Some delegates had to draft resolutions during dinner via text, but everyone had a

great time. However, after one check turned out to be a little bit more than predicted, all of the delegates had a great time. Delegates were then picked up from the hard rock cafe.

Finally, Friday came. Friday was the last day of the conference, when resolutions would be presented and pasted, and awards would be won. Friday started with committee at 8:30. This was one of the most pivotal points in the conference. This was when final touches were made to resolution and they were presented and advertised for in formal debate. This was also when resolutions were due, making it a time to finish resolutions that had not been finished yet. After a while of heated formal debate, committee broke for lunch. This time, delegates talked more about their resolutions and their strategies for passing them. After lunch, delegates returned to their committee for the last committee session of the conference. During this committee session, formal debate would wrap up with a few closing statements, and then, resolutions would be presented. Resolutions, which have two sets of clauses (Perambulatory and Operative) would have the operative clauses read so delegations would have a clear idea of what the resolution meant. Then, the resolutions were voted on. Most of the resolutions Q300 students supported had passed. Then, committees went to the awards ceremony. Q300s delegation in ITU-WHO won an honorable mention for best delegate, a large accomplishment for a bunch of 1st year 6th graders. Overall, it was an amazing experience, and we all had a great time. 🍌

came up with a list of things that come in fours such as paws, window panes, chair legs, table legs, butterfly wings, etc.

In this unit, students will develop different strategies on how to solve problems where there are groups. Some of the strategies we’ve shared with each other included counting by ones, skip counting, repeated addition, adding up one half and then adding up another half (4 right hands plus 4 left hands), and using multiplication.

We will continue to work on solving these problems that include groups. We also will be revisiting adding two digit numbers in this unit.

Service Learning Project

Class 101 has been working on their service-learning project. The students began with a neighborhood walk. After the neighborhood walk, students noticed some things that need some help in the neighborhood. They noticed four things: (1) Clean up the litter (2) Clean up tree pits (3) Safety rules for the Community Playground (4) Cleaning up the water basins. Class 101 narrowed it down to two choices: Cleaning up tree Pits and Cleaning up Litter. Class 101 will be focusing on this for their service-learning project.

Physical Education

Students have been working on kicking the ball into the goal! 🍌

PICTURES LEFT TO RIGHT: Noticing alliteration in the poem “River” by Jane Yolen. Getting ready to kick a goal! Taking the mealworm out of its “vial” habitat. Closely observing a wax worm.



Kindergarten Update

The Q300 kindergarteners have been busy with interesting and fun field trips the past several weeks. At the National Museum of Math in Manhattan, the children could see and experience different examples of the geometry they've been learning in math class. As one of the headings on the museum's website says: visitors can "See Mathematics in Action". For instance, in just one of the many exhibit activities, the children could experience how a square-wheeled tricycle can actually ride smoothly over a specifically shaped corrugated

The Kindergartener's participated in a hands-on workshop where they could use rhombuses, rectangles, octagons and more to create a variety of larger or more complex shapes. All this ties into the classroom where the children have been learning about, exploring and constructing 2D and 3D shapes using clay, geoboards and pattern blocks.

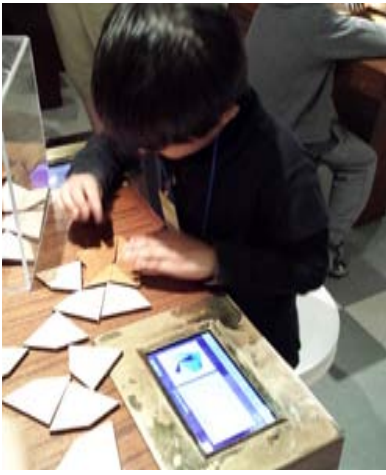
surface. There is also a display where children experiment with and understand the unique tracks made by a variety of 3D shapes when they're rolled across a flat surface. They also participated in a hands-on workshop where they could use rhombuses, rectangles, octagons and more to create a variety of larger or more complex shapes. All this ties into the classroom where the

children have been learning about, exploring and constructing 2D and 3D shapes using clay, geoboards and pattern blocks. The kindergarten classes recently went to Queens College to see an onstage production of Curious George where George was crazy

about meatballs. The musical adventure comedy featured George, the man in the yellow hat, Chef Pisghetti and friends travelling to Italy to enter a contest to decide who makes the world's best meatballs. Of course George went to Italy accidentally, entered the contest himself, cooked the Chef's meatball recipe and won the contest. The children, chaperones and teachers all had a wonderful time.

The kindergarten classes also went on an interesting and fun trip to the Queens Zoo at Flushing Meadow in Corona, where they learned about how different animals eat and survive in their natural habitats. They could even feed a couple of the animals such as the chinchilla and pig.

On Sunday May 3rd, the PTA K class reps organized a casual get together loosely related to the class trip to the Queens Zoo. The families who were able to meet in the Central Park Zoo had spectacular weather to enjoy a fun, relaxing day outside. Everyone could watch the penguins being fed, join the crowd around the sea lion tank as the sea lions did tricks at feeding time, see colorful exotic birds and other little creatures in the Tropic Zone / bird sanctuary, watch playful monkeys & grizzly bears, and peek at the sleepy snow leopard. Everyone walked to the adjacent



Tisch Children's Zoo to see and feed a few animals and then wandered into Central Park for still more picnic and play time.

The kindergarteners will soon be involved in service projects such as a walkathon on June 3rd to raise funds for important charitable organizations. With the 100th anniversary of "Be Kind to Animals Week" in early May, one of the chosen charitable organizations will be the American Humane Association. Other donations will be to aid the people of Nepal who have recently experienced a devastating earthquake and aftershocks. Please help the children gather donations for these important causes.

Family Engagement Night on May 13th was a great opportunity for parents to learn, understand and experience what and how the children learn the classroom. Three workshops were targeted for grades K & 1.

In Alex's workshop "A Parent's Guide to a Primary Writer's Workshop", participating parents had the opportunity to write & developed their own poetry, experiencing how the children learn to develop a creative writing process and different strategies which apply to all writing. This is good for parents to understand, as the kindergarteners have recently been working on a unit on persuasive writing.

In Jackie's workshop "Digging Deep into Reading Running Records: Comprehension, Accuracy & Fluency", parents could learn about& understand the process of evaluating the children's reading levels. As an example, Jackie made some intentional mistakes as she read a passage from a book. She explained what the teachers observed and take score on during an evaluation of accuracy, comprehension and fluency: Students are evaluated individually. Accuracy is measured by the number of times the child either inserted, switched, mispronounced or omitted words, or otherwise struggled with the passage. Comprehension is measured by a series of questions or prompts intended to show what the student understood from the reading, and Jackie provided several examples showing different levels of understanding. Children also have the opportunity to express their understanding through drawing. Fluency is evaluated by the student's pronunciation & expression, and whether they're struggling or reading too slowly. Student are evaluated individually at their current level, then they're given slightly more challenging books to read until they find a level they can read independently and one they can read with some help.

Eileen also gave a workshop "Shapes, Shapes, Shapes: An Early Childhood Look at Geometry". There are plans in the works to have similar workshops earlier in the school year going forward. ☺

In the next couple weeks there will be additional information about the kindergarten stepping up celebration on June 25th, keep an eye out for e-mails.

PICTURES LEFT TO RIGHT: Riding square wheeled bicycle at the Math Museum. Sitting in the seats at Curious George. Playing with geometry toys at the Math Museum. In the eagle's nest at the Queens Zoo.

Meet the Sixth Grade Teachers



Ms. Annette

Ms. Annette teaches Social Studies and English Language Arts (ELA) at Q300. ELA consists of the close reading of complex texts, informational and argumentative writing, and the study of literature. For sixth graders, the Social Studies curriculum encompasses Ancient Civilizations (with units covering Geography, the Neolithic Revolution, River Valley Civilizations, and Classical Civilizations). This year, Ms. Annette integrates ELA and Social Studies together as Humanities.

Ms. Annette has teaching experience in ELA and Social Studies at another New York City middle school in Washington Heights. She had originally intended to teach elementary school, but received her first teaching position during a city hiring freeze – the available position was for sixth grade Social Studies, and she took it and fell in love with teaching middle schoolers. She gained experience teaching grades six through eight, with the additional opportunity of looping with both of her sixth grade classes until their eighth grade graduations.

At Q300, the sixth graders typically start their day with advisory, where they are divided into two sections, one led by Betty and the other, Ms.

Ms. Annette's favorite thing about Q300 is that the teachers are respected as content specialists and empowered to enhance the curriculum they present to students. For each class she provides meaningful assignments to her students, knowing they are eager to participate.

Annette. Advisory helps students to build skills in a variety of ways. For example, with the “Reach the World” program, the students follow the journey of a college student studying abroad. The students read journal entries and field notes on the traveler’s experience, Skype, and compose messages with the traveler along the way. This type of global enrichment gets the students thinking about college and career opportunities. After advisory, the students travel between Betty and Ms. Annette’s

classrooms (along with technology) for the other instructional periods. Betty and Ms. Annette provide instructional support in one another’s classes.

During a typical class, Ms. Annette will take five to ten minutes to introduce the lesson. The students will then engage in independent and group (more often than not) work. It is a blended learning class – integrating technology into the curriculum. Ms. Annette utilizes the NYC iLearn platform and Google Classroom, along with various Web 2.0 tools (such as Prezi, Google Applications, or VoiceThread) into her instruction. With the use of these applications, students are able to manage their assignments with greater ease, publish their work for an audience of their peers, and employ creative elements to their work. Ms. Annette feels that the level of independent and cooperative learning and organization is strengthened through the use of online discussion boards, Dropboxes, collaborative documents, and ePortfolio manage-

ment. Of course middle schoolers have additional work outside of the classroom. For Humanities, Ms. Annette assigns one hour of nightly reading, though her students who love reading often do more than that. She also consistently requires participation in a student-facilitated, online discussion board, relating to trending global topics.

With her Q300 sixth graders well-equipped with basic comprehension skills, Ms. Annette spends a lot of her time on higher-order thinking skills. She pushes students to make connections across multiple domains and evaluate potential outcomes for a situation based on what they have already learned and know. For example, she has asked them to evaluate social structures in Ancient Egypt and make connections to the modern world. The basic teaching is that there were class systems in Ancient Egypt. Ms. Annette goes beyond that and asks students to consider what social class divisions exist within our own society by analyzing census data and homeownership statistics, and to compare those divisions to Ancient Egypt.

Ms. Annette is an avid traveler with an ambitious goal to visit every country in the world. So far she has been to seven, with many fabulous trips under her belt and a whole lot more to experience in the future! Her favorite places so far have been England and Ireland (repeating those trips multiple times already). She is very much a big-city person, except when she is engaging in her other favorite pastime – horseback riding – which she does in Westchester on the weekends.

Ms. Annette was born and raised in Brooklyn with her three siblings. She became a teacher because she wanted to help students realize their potential. She got first-hand experience working with children when she volunteered in her younger sister’s classroom, who was in second grade at the time. It inspired her to pursue her Master of Science in Education (MSed) in Childhood Education from Binghamton University and her Advanced Certificate in Gifted and Talented Education at Hunter College.

Ms. Annette’s favorite things about Q300 are the motivation and love of learning from the students, as well as how teachers are respected as content specialists and empowered to enhance the curriculum they present to students. For each class she works hard to provide meaningful assignments to her students, knowing they are eager to participate in everything and anything she has to offer. The result is a highly engaged class where she gets to see her students become more independent as individuals and thinkers every day. 🍌

Betty

Betty is in her sixth year of teaching, with experience in middle and elementary school (having taught fifth grade) in East Harlem and Central Harlem NYC schools. Betty delights in middle-school aged students. She finds them to be articulate and thoughtful and she enjoys classroom discussions and her individual interactions with students, always happy to learn from them. For Betty, one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching is watching students rise to the high expectations that she sets for them.

At Q300 Betty teaches the sixth graders math and science and is responsible for an advisory. She also puts her artistic talents and expertise to work during the arts enrichment block. Betty's teaching is inquiry-based – she encourages students to ask and answer challenging questions. In both math and science Betty uses traditional textbooks in addition to many other teaching tools. In the classroom, Betty serves as a facilitator, striving to make our children's' education as student-centered as possible. She utilizes computers as tools for research and inquiry, with students performing research, doing homework, and documenting their reflections.

Betty's math lessons often include sophisticated projects – for example for a recent statistics lesson, each student had to choose a question to conduct a survey. She established three criteria for the assignment

Betty remembers fondly her time spent in academic labs with her dad at the University of Pennsylvania. In her own science class as a young student she had an assignment to form a hypothesis and test it. With her dad's help she was able to deliver a project on: Does bacteria become resistant to antibiotics when exposure to radiation.

– the question must be answerable, the population must be accessible, and the data analysis must be used to benefit the community. One group of students pursued the question: Do first graders feel peer pressure? They worked with Alex's class to survey the younger students during morning meeting, analyzed the data, and provided it back to him to impact his teaching. Another group met with Matt to answer the question: What styles of community activities are preferred? They planned to provide the data

back to Q300 so that it could be used to plan meaningful activities.

Betty's science class at Q300 is primarily teacher made advance investigations, based on the FOSS curriculum model which provides investigation-based in-depth exposure to the subject of science. Her science lab utilizes two consecutive 40 minute blocks to provide ample time for thorough research and investigation into the topic at hand. Betty is a born scientist, with her father working as an academic research scientist when she was growing up. She remembers fondly her time spent in academic labs with him at the University of Pennsylvania. At one point in her own science class as a young student she had an assignment to form a hypothesis and test it. With her dad's help she was able to deliver a project on: Does bacteria become resistant to antibiotics when exposure to radiation (yes, it does.) Go Betty!



Betty joined Q300 because she was excited about all of the possibilities that a new school could offer. She is full of energy and was looking for a place to put her efforts to good use. She knew that all of the teachers and staff that joined a new school would be dedicated and take ownership to build a new community and school. Her first year has met her expectations and more – she has found the parent engagement to be very valuable, she has good communication with parents and has a lot of volunteers to chaperone field trips and help on class projects.

Betty grew up all over the country, including Mississippi, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Her family has been a major influence on her and her decision to pursue teaching, especially her younger sister who is twice exceptional – because of her intellectual gifts and her special needs. Betty observed her sister struggling in a traditional school setting where there was little understanding of how to nurture her talents. With the support of her family she overcame many challenges to ultimately achieve success in school and go on to college, an inspiration to Betty. Betty brings her personal experience to bear in working with parents on overcoming challenges in school – she understands how parents feel and can provide perspective about a positive future.

Betty is an enthusiastic Astorian – she lives and works in the local community. She came to New York City after getting her undergraduate degree in fine arts, achieving a BFA in Illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design. She spent some time working in the art world and eventually decided to pursue a career in teaching, going back to graduate school at Fordham for elementary and special education. Betty also continues to pursue her art – look for her silk-screen pieces in Q300's PTA Auction! 🎨



PICTURES TOP LEFT: Science experiment. BOTTOM LEFT: Planting seeds. ABOVE: Quill pen making and writing.

Upcoming News & Events

Stepping Into Summer Dance Party and Auction - May 31, 4-7PM

1st Grade Final Date for **Scholastic Book order** - June 1st

Kidegarten **Walk-a-thon for American Humane Association** - June 3

PTA Executive Board Meeting - June 4, 8:30AM

1st Grade **Poetry Café** - June 5, 8:30AM

6th Grade **Violin Concert** - June 9, 9AM

1st Grade **LIC Growers Trip** - June 12

6th Grade **Basketball Game** - June 16, 2PM

6th Grade **Engineering Expo** - June 19, 10:30AM

PTA General Meeting - June 19, 6PM

The Alternative Recess Club

The Alternative Recess Club (ARC) was started as Betty's way to foster inclusion at recess. Sometimes students do better with structured activities or smaller settings. The ARC exists to allow students the choice to participate in a guided activity instead of free play. Students sign up to host an ARC and then they become the facilitator, preparing and leading the activity. ARC takes place every Wednesday in Betty's room during lunch. Betty started by facilitating a group on manga drawing and then let students come up with ideas. Student activities have included:

- Movie showings
- Quill pen making
- Science experiments with food coloring
- Oil spill engineering (extended from a class activity to a larger scale.)
- Clash of Clans mini lecture
- Pokémon cards
- Five Nights and Freddy's mini lecture
- Pusheen (the cat) fan drawings

Based on the success and level of student initiative, Jackie and Betty decided to add to our inclusion by having K2 students as guests. Now we open 5 slots each week to students who have worked hard (with the goal of making a space for everyone eventually.)

- K2 has joined us for:
 - Carnation coloring and seed planting
 - Make your own sandwich buffet
 - Chocolate dipped pretzel rod making

The 6th graders enjoy being hosts and make sure everyone feels included. A great side effect is that Betty has gotten to learn even more about her students and all their diverse interests. She would like to thank the parents who have helped kids get materials together to make everything happen. She has really enjoyed all the activities they led and is always astounded by their creativity. 🙌

A Picture is worth a 1,000 words

We need more pictures of all of the amazing kids and activities going on at School. If you are in school take out your cell phone, take a pic and send it to the newsletter editors at Q300ptanewsletter@gmail.com.

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We welcome your contributions, if you have article ideas or photos for the next newsletter contact Jamie Trish at Q300ptanewsletter@gmail.com.