



saw on the sculpture. We shared our drawings with each other, and we could make comments and ask questions.

SUE: We live in Astoria, and Anika and I have visited the Noguchi Museum only once before. I didn't know much about Noguchi so when the teachers organized this field trip, I started reading about him. It turns out Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was one of our century's most critically acclaimed sculptors, an extensive traveler and a political activist, who used his life experiences to create beautiful pieces of art out of many different types of materials. He established and designed the Noguchi Museum in 1985, marking the culmination of his commitment to public spaces, but his designs can be seen all over the world, including the very famous "Red Cube" in NYC's financial district.

The field trip for the second grade was perfectly timed as the students are finishing up their study of rocks and Noguchi used a variety of rocks in his pieces. The first sculpture that Anika described above ("Double Red Mountain") definitely caught the interest of the kids and what impressed me was how they noticed the intricate details like the different colors of the rocks layers and the holes from the

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The Noguchi Museum 2nd Grade Field Trip!

By Anika Chandran and Sue Sekar

On December 2nd, 2016, the second grade went on a field trip to the Noguchi Museum. Second grade student, Anika Chandran and parent chaperone, Sue Sekar, provide some of the highlights from that trip.

ANIKA: We were split into smaller groups in our classes, and some of us went on a tour around the museum first, while other groups did a workshop (and then later we swapped). Our tour guide went to three sculptures. The first sculpture was made from a rock that came from the bottom of a lake. It was formed by dead animals, plants, leaves and all kinds of nature that had sunk. It took thousands of years to form! It was very big but Noguchi cut it with a diamond saw (a diamond saw has diamonds on the tip and can cut through almost anything). It looked like 2 piles of sand. On the bottom were holes. That was where Noguchi cut it and air bubbles that were trapped inside came out.

The rock used to make the second sculpture was from a mountain. Noguchi bought it from a quarry. It probably cost tons of money because it was huge! The shape of it reminded me of an iceberg. Noguchi put a few patterns on the rock. One of the patterns he made were holes and he also made some lines. We got to touch some other rocks too that the guide had brought along, but we could not touch Noguchi's sculptures because the tour guide told us that oils on our fingers can damage them.

The third sculpture we looked at was very tall. It had many different colors such as tan, brown, white and a little bit of red. The tour guide gave us some paper and crayons and asked us to draw the colors we

Edwin is a Dad - again!



You may have noticed Edwin walking around at the Halloween party with a toddler . . . and a car seat with a infant in it! Edwin is now the father of two boys! Congratulations Edwin!

Direct Appeal - What's the Deal?

It's that time of the year again – the PTA is hitting you up for direct appeal contributions.

What's the real story? We sat down with Sue Sekar, Q300 PTA Executive Vice President, to ask all of the questions that may be on your mind...

Why do we need to raise direct appeal money? I pay taxes, so why can't the school pay for everything?

Q300 gets a set amount of funding from the Department of Education. Unfortunately, it is not enough to pay for every enrichment that the Q300 administration considers necessary or desirable. So if we relied on this funding alone, the school would need to make some tough choices about which programs to implement and which ones our kids would miss out on.

Wait, the school budget doesn't automatically pay for programs like art, music, and dance, and teaching assistants? How can we ensure our kids aren't missing out on educational essentials due to budget constraints?

The PTA steps in to cover the funding for those programs and resources so that we can provide our kids with high quality enrichment. Hopefully you will have seen some of the direct appeal information that has been previously circulated, so you already know that the PTA pays for middle and elementary school programs such as music, arts, dance, architecture, model UN expenses, robotics kits; and essential equipment like Chromebooks, storage carts, library books, teacher wishlist items - the list goes on. In the lower grades, the PTA pays for teaching assistants, so

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the teachers are better able to focus on instruction. Without financial contributions from our community, none of these enrichment activities would be possible.

Who decides how the Direct Appeal funds are spent?

We all do! Principal Bill has a detailed understanding of the gaps in the school budget and a firm idea of what missing areas of the curriculum need to be made a high priority. In addition, the PTA surveys the parent community each year, and volunteer parents research various enrichment programs. The entire PTA community approves the annual budget. Priorities change, and the PTA can adapt as needed. For example, in Q300's first year, the PTA paid for a sports program for the first and sixth grades. In the second year, that PTA funding was reallocated to other programs as the school had existing teachers cover the sports curriculum. In the current year, we are grateful to have a

dedicated physical education teacher provided by the DOE, as a result of the school's growth. So each year, the PTA together with the school administration discusses the upcoming year's priorities in detail so we can properly round out the education curriculum for our kids.

Why does the PTA run a Direct Appeal campaign? Why can't we just rely other fundraiser events?

The Direct Appeal is an effective way to raise money directly from Q300 families and friends with little overhead expenses. Other fundraisers have a dual purpose – raising money of course, but just as importantly, community building. They are fun, but they take a LOT of work! And while these fundraisers do provide a lot of value in bringing our community together, they tend to bring in less money than the Direct Appeal.

What happens if we don't have a Direct Appeal campaign?

The PTA would have a very small budget if we relied on other fundraising strategies and did not have a Direct Appeal campaign. There would be little or no music or art instruction in the school curriculum. Teachers would have to spend their own hard-earned money on essential equipment needed for their classrooms. Too much time would be spent by the teachers in the lower grades on administrative and routine tasks and it would impede on necessary instruction time. Basically, if we don't raise enough in money in the direct appeal, it will mean less enrichment programs for our kids.

Why does the PTA have a suggested dollar amount for direct appeal contributions?

We need to raise enough money to meet our budget, otherwise the PTA-funded enrichment programs and resources will have to be scaled back, or in some cases, cease altogether. As a brand new citywide Gifted and Talented school, we looked at what the other, more established, citywide Gifted and Talented schools were asking for in their Direct Appeal campaigns. We are not trying to force ourselves to adopt their exact models, but we did consider that they are highly sought after institutions that have successful enrichment programming.

Having said that, the Direct Appeal ask is a suggested amount only and ANY donation is valued and appreciated. It is about contributing to your child's school community. You don't have to just pay out of pocket. You can hit up your friends and family – and remind them it's tax deductible! Or do a fun-run (is a run ever

really ‘fun’?) and fundraise that way. And many parents give in other ways – they volunteer their time or their technical expertise, which is also greatly appreciated.

Thanks for giving us the low-down on the Direct Appeal, Sue. Is there anything else parents should know?

It’s important to remember that Direct Appeal funds are used for the current year’s programming. Every contribution we make will be used to enrich our kids’ experience - this year, right now. Current fundraising does provide a benefit to the future generations of Q300 students in that it establishes a history of quality enrichment and a culture of giving in the community. But the direct appeal funds raised in the current year is primarily for this year’s priorities. We did have to raise extra funds in our first school year so we could build up an opening cash balance that allowed us to start the second year with immediate implementation of enrichment programs.

It’s also important to note that while the grades may be split geographically at two different campuses, every decision about the direct appeal is made with a “one-school” mentality. Each contribution is appreciated and participation is important, so give what you can.

And you can be creative with your fundraising! One parent gave up buying coffee for some time, and donated those proceeds to the Direct Appeal. Some parents have asked birthday party guests to give a donation to the Q300 PTA Direct Appeal in lieu of gifts for their child. Other parents have asked their friends or family to make a tax-deductible contribution to the Q300 PTA. Every little bit helps the PTA pay for what the school needs to support the education

Noguchi - Cont. from p. 1

air bubbles. As various students shared their thoughts and observations, there was a lot of signing of “I agree” (pinky and thumb held out, hands vigorously shaking as they signaled that their classmate was making a valid point!)

The second sculpture the students studied was called “The Roar” which many of the kids correctly identified as being made out of marble. They marveled at the ‘natural’ carvings compared with Noguchi’s very deliberate artistic carvings, and contemplated what would they do if given a piece of rock to shape as they saw fit.

I have to confess that the third sculpture (“To Intrude on Nature’s Way”) appeared at first glance to be just a simple tan and grey rock. But what the kids saw beyond that blew my mind. They noticed so many other subtle colors like white, brown, red, yellow, black. Waverly said she really enjoyed trying to replicate the colors she saw on the sculpture on a piece of paper. The kids also noticed Noguchi had cut the rock in pieces and then put them back together. The name of the piece started to make sense to me – Noguchi had intruded on this naturally formed rock in his own pursuit of artistic creation. The kids understood the meaning behind the piece way before I did, simply because they did something that we as adults often forget to do. They stopped, they observed and they contemplated. Olivia and Maya both said that they really liked looking at all the different types of sculptures throughout the museum and Nathalie commented that guessing what types of rock Noguchi had used for each piece was a lot of fun and quite challenging.

In the workshop, the kids made their own art using a technique called ‘texture rubbing’ (coloring on a piece of paper with crayons with a small rock underneath, creating various textures on the paper). This was a highlight for many of the kids, with Iris, Jasmine, Ben and Luka all saying that this was their favorite part of the day. It was interesting to see that despite being given the same instructions by the teacher and the same materials to work with, each piece created was special and unique. There were many different interpretations of the project (some kids made multiple blobs of different colors while some of them turned the blobs into actual objects or people). Some colored furiously, resulting in an energetic and highly colorful piece, while others quietly and gently applied the texture rubbing technique, using mostly pale pastels and calming colors. It was a good reminder of something I have heard our classroom teachers say many times - that there are many different ways to apply rules and techniques to get to an end result. It is about finding the process and path that is most comfortable for each of us as individuals. I learned many new things today, and a lot of the teaching definitely came from the kids. 🍌



Calendar & Upcoming Events

School Pictures

JANUARY 9TH: Order deadline for Stomping Ground School Pictures. JANUARY 25TH: School Picture Retake Day, email Dora@q300.org

Martin Luther King Day

JANUARY 16TH No School for Martin Luther King Day



Meet Olena

Olena joined the Q300 middle school teaching staff this year, drawn to the community feel and the school's focus on inquiry-based education. She is in her sixth year of teaching science, and has experience in both middle school and high school in the Bronx and Manhattan.

While this is her first teaching job in Queens she was born and raised (and still lives) here so it is more of a homecoming than something new!

Olena is Ukrainian American and teaching was a big part of her childhood experience. Both of her parents are educators and she was the sort of kid who would play school instead of playing house. She fondly recalls giving lessons to her stuffed animals and then administering tests on the material. Not only did she run her own in-home classroom she also talked her parents into allowing her to help them grade papers. Now an experienced educator herself, her career has turned out to be even more than she imagined it could be. She loves seeing students make connections between what they are learning in the classroom with what they experience in the real world and delights in witnessing educational progress over each academic year.

Olena works hard to create a warm and welcoming environment for her students and she engages them with hands on experiments. She appreciates that middle school is a very special time where students are maturing but still very excited to come to school and she delights in their inquisitive nature.

Interestingly enough, Olena was never good at science when she was in school and did not enjoy the subject when she was growing up. The material felt hard for her, but when she was in high school she discovered labs and hands on experiments and it opened up a whole new world. She started to find the creativity in science . . . planning an experiment

when you don't know the answer allows you to think of a world of possibilities. Olena also realized that even if your hypothesis is wrong, you still have created new questions for yourself.

Olena brings her enthusiasm for lab work to her students. One experiment her eighth graders completed this year was an enzyme lab where the students tested a specific enzyme that exists in potatoes called catalase. The students tested the effects on the temperature and ph on enzyme activity. What is enzyme activity you ask? This enzyme in particular has a job of breaking down hydrogen peroxide into water and oxygen. This is kind of important because cells make hydrogen peroxide naturally but it is toxic . . . In order to observe the impact on enzyme activity students put a piece of potato into hydrogen peroxide and saw what happened. With respect to temperature, the students observed that enzyme activity was highest a room temperature, when it was warmer it still worked but to a lesser extent, and when it was frozen it didn't work at all.

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appreciates that middle school is a very special time where students are maturing but still very excited to come to school and she delights in their inquisitive nature (there are always a lot of hands raised!). She is preparing her seventh and eighth grade students for the Regents exam at the end of the year and reminds us parents that success with the culminating exam will give our students high school credit for this class.

Olena attended Hunter College for her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Biology and Adolescent Education. Outside of her work she spends her time practicing yoga and is very interested in foreign languages – she speaks Ukrainian and Spanish and she likes to learn different languages for fun. She brings that same inquisitive attitude to school with her every day to her Q300 classroom! ☺

Past Teacher & Staff Features

You can learn more about other Q300 teachers in staff from past feature articles – go to www.q300pta.org and navigate to the Q300PTA Home menu . . . you will see Newsletters listed under Documents.

- Jill – November 2014
- Scott – January 2015
- Cristina & Alex – February 2015
- Edwin – March 2015
- Betty – May 2015
- Sharon & Eileen – June 2015
- Sarah – April 2016
- Brooke & Bill – June 2016

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