



# Newsletter

30th Avenue School – Inclusion. Inquiry. Responsibility.

## Q300 PTA FALL 2019 ISSUE

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Welcome to the PTA's Fall newsletter! As families return for another academic year, check out the faces of Q300 in collage of first-day-of-school pictures. Learn about the big ideas behind our work with NASA and live vicariously through a 7th grader studying abroad in Chile. Find out what drives fantastic teachers Stephanie Prainnath-Teekasingh and Laura Parris. Grab a tissue for a mother-daughter interview about moving to the Upper Division, meet a wonderful Q300 family, and discover more about our PTA's history. Principal Biniaris welcomes families back and a class parent shines a spotlight on class 202. Finally, take a moment to remember a special member of our PTA community.

### Back to School!





Students pictured from top: Lenina (4th grade), Axel (6th grade), Violet (3rd grade), Karina (K) and Anika (5th), Eric (1st grade), Elliot (1st grade) and Emily (3rd grade).





Students pictured from top:  
 (Group photo, from left to right) Erin, Zihe, Kristen, Kelly, Jasmine, Audrey, Katherine, and Annie (6th grade), Younus (4th grade), Oceana and Vera (2nd and 1st grades), Nathalie and Vera (5th and 1st grades), Myriam and mom (6th grade and orever young - coming from the airport!), and Timothy (6th grade).

## Thinking Galactically, Acting Locally: NASA/Q300 Connection Update

By Wennie Chen



Dr. David Kipping presenting to students.

It is my pleasure to announce to the Q300 community that our application to NASA Downlink has been accepted in Phase 1. NASA Downlink allows participants to Skype with astronauts from the International Space Station. Phase 2, which is the most critical, requires a perfect match of a day and time in our submissions with the astronauts'. If this happens, we can expect a Downlink connection with Expedition 61/62 crew members between February-April 2020. We sincerely hope that our children will have this incredible opportunity.

In 2017, I first proposed this plan to Principal Biniaris. The plan was not officially finalized until Lynn Kennedy jumped on board in Spring 2018. "It all started with a hope," I recalled. Under the dark cloud of the 2016 election year I found myself wishing that the phrase "Peace on Earth" not simply be a wish. It should be an ideal — a seed to plant and nourish among the young, here and now.

When situating Earth, the place we call home, within the 200 billion observable galaxies in the universe, we are forced to ask: is it still worth fighting over our differences? Downlink provided the opportunity for our children to think and answer this question.

What if our children are engrossed with space by seeing astronauts floating and flipping in mid-air, showing off their never-tiring fidget spinner? What if students then start wondering about existence itself and the building blocks of life? What if they investigate how human species and societies evolved and what we and other earthlings need in order to survive beyond Mother Earth? It's physics, chemistry, biology, geology, math, history... It's humanity.

"I remember growing up wanting to be an astronaut after the Apollo 11 moon landing inspired the world. My ultimate goal is to provide children similar opportunities that bring in vision and at the same time build creative, critical thinking and problem solving skills that will help them develop a good sense of citizenship for the world." With Lynn's like-minded idea we moved forward.

Supported by the Q300 administration, its dedicated teachers, D30 Superintendent Dr. Composto, the Queens Borough President, and many elected officials, in Fall 2018, NASA Downlink and the Q300 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) Campaign was officially launched.

Q300's STEAM Campaign has introduced to students principles of science research and exploration through field trips to museums, zoos, STEM workshops, BioBus, telescope viewing, and most excitingly, speeches from established university professors. Dr. David Kipping of Columbia University spent half a day with our middle-schoolers to talk about his discoveries in exoplanets and exomoons. Dr. Shermane Austin of CUNY shared her experience in the CUNY-SAT1 cube satellite launch with NASA. This invaluable exposure and direct interactions with prominent scientists have brought inspiration to many young inquisitive minds.

The school ended the campaign with its very first STEAM Fair where the students showcased their research and science projects – planetary models, robotic designs, space habitat architecture, a biology art exhibit, Math Quest, and new inventions of weather instruments, to name a few. Thanks to the coordination of AP Sonita Ramkishun, 8th grade math teacher Anna Hauser and many others, our STEAM Fair proved to be an invaluable experience and enjoyed by the members of the school community.

We believe through the process of working collaboratively to problem solve issues through science and the respect for life, our children are developing a sense of responsibility as world citizens. They are always encouraged to Dream Big. No matter what the outcome of our NASA Downlink application, Lynn and I believe our children are already winners!

And don't forget, we are looking forward to our second STEAM Fair in 2020!

## The Language of Chess



Players, left to right: Cristóbal Rossel Grandón, Matías Andrés Jaque Gutiérrez, Sascha Gordon-Zolov, María Ignacia Rossel Grandón  
By Sascha Gordon-Zolov, 7th Grader (Sascha is currently studying abroad in Chile and will return to Q300 in Spring 2020.)  
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I awoke to the lights of the plane being turned on. It was three in the morning. Two hours later, we arrived in Santiago, Chile-- tired, hungry and cold. It was July 15th and the middle of winter. The first few weeks were a whole new experience for me. I didn't know the language, and it was extremely hard to communicate. We did okay in the beginning, buying things and saying the occasional gracias (thank you) and permiso (excuse me). You had to go by the one or two words you knew in the sentences you heard.

On August 1st, we started school. They have a very strict dress code – the kind of clothing that you would wear to a formal event. Most students know some English because all of the courses through fourth grade are taught in English. Some students helped me through classes and translated the material that I did not understand. We have two breaks each day, and on the first day, I didn't really know what to do. I found the library and went to see if they had any books in English that I could read. I walked in and saw chessboards. I was instantly drawn to them and completely forgot about the books. I watched some kids play. After the game, one of them got up and asked me if I wanted to

play. I understood and sat down.

It was a fun game even though it ended quickly. I played a few more matches before the bell rang. None of them had been too hard to win, but they had all been very fun to play. After a few more class periods, the second and final 15-minute break came along. I was now very excited that I had something to do during the breaks.

On the third day of school, someone new challenged me, an eighth grader named Matías. I was excited to see a new face, and we started to play. I didn't expect my opponent to be very strong. Yet after the first few moves, I knew he wasn't just a normal player. The game ended in less than 25 moves. I asked for a rematch, and he accepted. We played more games over the next few days, and I learned a lot from playing with him. One day, Matías told me that there was a tournament coming up, and he invited me to take part.

I didn't know what to expect. When we got there, I was surprised to see just how many people there were. There must have been about 30 teams (four players to a team). I was really nervous before starting. Our team started at the top table, which is the most advanced section. We had to hold the table for six rounds. The games were incredibly stressful and fast as we only had 15 minutes on the clock. The first few rounds were simple, but the games got more intense as we progressed. Matías won in the fourth round with only six seconds left on his clock! It turns out that he will be representing Chile in the South American tournament in December. We ended up holding the table and won the tournament. It really was an amazing moment for me. I didn't know how to talk with anyone, but I was still able to connect with others through this game, the language, of chess.

## **Meet our Teacher: Stephanie Praitnath-Teekasingh**

*Interview by Neerja Vasishtha*



### **What inspired you to be a teacher and how long have you been with Q300?**

My father was a college professor in Guyana and my mentor was a teacher from high school. My passion for teaching started very young. I used to line up all my stuffed animals and read to them every night. I view teaching as a partnership with other intellectuals to fill young minds with knowledge. By way of background, I have my BA in Childhood Education from St. Francis College and a MS in Education & Instructional Technology from the University at Albany. My career began as a tutor, then teaching assistant, and then substitute teacher. Fast forward and now I've been teaching second grade at Q300 for the past four years. The warmth and strong camaraderie displayed amongst staff adds to my joy of coming in every morning.

### **How would you describe your teaching philosophy and style?**

I would say my philosophy in the classroom is an evolving tranquil "safe space" where the principal, teachers, and parents all have an equal partnership in progressively coming up with ways in which students are captivated and informed by real world experiences. Q300 has proven to be an outstanding school that brings first class excellence in teaching to our Gifted & Talented learners. I personally like to work one-on-one with students and customize my curriculum based on their skills. Each child is different and each has their own distinct learning style. My job and privilege is to serve them to the best of my ability.

### **What are your hopes for your students this year?**

My hope is for all my students to be so engaged that it drives curiosity and tons of questions. I believe children don't ask "why" enough and they can't ask the "why" if they don't know the importance of a topic. My hope is to highlight the important parts of our curriculum that will invoke curiosity to ask more questions. When I hear questions, I will understand their thought process. I'm less concerned about whether an answer is right or wrong. My goal is to train rational thinkers, which is a transferable skill set beyond this grade.

**Who was your favorite teacher? Why? What made them stand out?**

My favorite teachers are Mrs. Chan from high school and Dr. Gair from undergraduate studies; both whom I still keep in contact with today. They are my favorite because they took the time to find out each student's passion and connect them with leaders that will assist them in reaching that goal. They knew I wanted to become a teacher so they took the ownership to be my mentor and provided invaluable guidance. And most importantly, they were relatable. Sometimes you need mentors to just be a friend and hear you out on a personal or professional note.

**What Q300 policy or approach resonates with you the most?**

Inclusion resonates with me the most. I am an offspring of immigrants, and if it weren't for the hardships my parents went through, I wouldn't have had this opportunity to teach. The struggles felt insurmountable growing up. But with my background, I am able to bring a different point of view that is valued. Just like all my students, some may have similar or different backgrounds, but I promote inclusion because it helps diversify our student body, teaches respect for what people stand for, and provides a platform for voices to be heard no matter what age, race, etc.

**What do you like to do in your free time?**

I love cooking, baking, and traveling abroad with my husband. My goal is to have my own food truck business one day, and there is not a weekend that I don't try out a new recipe. These three hobbies allow me to experience and expose myself to different cultures. Having traveled to over 15 countries, each trip is unique and allows me to understand the sensitivities of how different groups of people view culture. My students always look forward to seeing these pictures and hearing stories; we learn from each other!

**What's a little known fact about you?**

I am an adventure junkie. I have zip lined through the longest zip line in Latin America! I'm also a cake & pizza connoisseur.



## **Meet our Teacher: Laura Parris**

*Interview by Neerja Vasishtha*



### **Can you tell us a little about your teaching background? What are you teaching this year at Q300 and how long have you been here?**

I received my Master of Arts in the Teaching of English from Teachers College, Columbia University. Apart from my student teaching where I taught 7th and 8th grade ELA at the Manhattan Country School and 11th grade English at Brooklyn Technical High School, my first full-time teaching position began at Q300. During my time at Q300, I have taught a mix of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade ELA. This is now my fourth year teaching at Q300. I am currently teaching 7th and 8th grade ELA. I am also the 8th grade co-advisor. Additionally, I teach a Shakespeare musical theatre elective, and I run two clubs during lunch (journalism and oral storytelling).

### **How would you describe your teaching philosophy or style?**

I have discovered in my own personal life that my best and most rewarding experiences have come from taking risks and pushing myself outside of my comfort zone, and I have tried to bring this philosophy into my classroom. I ask a lot of my students and I expect them to be open to trying new things, whether it's acting/performing or working with a new group. However, I know that none of this vulnerability would be possible without first creating an atmosphere and community of trust. To me, building this trust is paramount and a necessity if I'm to expect students to push their own limits and step outside of their comfort zones, so that the real magic of exploration and discovery can happen.

### **Is there a specific topic or unit that you passionate about teaching? Why?**

My two absolute favorite things to teach are Shakespeare and oral storytelling. In graduate school, I had the most amazing professor for my Teaching of Shakespeare class. He made Shakespeare so fun and so accessible, and I've carried a lot of what I learned in that class into my own classroom. While my students are always hesitant when we begin a Shakespeare unit, I love how excited they get when we act out the play, and I've seen firsthand how much drama techniques and strategies can really enhance students' understanding of a text. In the past few years, I've attended a couple of teaching workshops at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. and, every time I go, I return to the classroom feeling so inspired to try out new ideas.

My other passion is teaching oral storytelling. After attending my first ever Moth story slam a few years ago, I began an oral storytelling elective called "The Butterfly." For the past two years, the students in this elective have performed in a story slam in the auditorium in front of their peers and have then published a book of their stories. It has been so rewarding to watch these students evolve from being so shy and nervous to performing so confidently up on stage and then becoming published authors. This elective has helped these students to not only become confident public speakers, but it has also given these students an opportunity for their voices to be heard, which I think is so beautiful and so incredibly important.

**What are your hopes for your students as a whole this year?**

I hope that my students learn more about themselves, each other, and the world around us as we read literature with themes that transcend the pages and carry over into our own lives. I want my students to remain curious and inquisitive. I want them to ask questions that challenge themselves, each other, and me, as I want us all to grow and learn together. And, above all else, I want to build a safe and nurturing community where students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks while exploring the issues that matter most to them.

**Who was your favorite teacher growing up? Why? What made them stand out for you?**

This is such a hard question because I've had so many teachers whom I've adored. However, my absolute favorites were my 7th grade math teacher, Mr. Pumphret, and my 8th grade science teacher, Mr. Lindgren. There's the saying that people will forget what you said or did, but they won't forget how you made them feel. This saying holds true for these two teachers. While I do have some memories of the activities that we did in class, what stands out most in my mind is that I never doubted how much they cared about me and my classmates. They went above and beyond to form connections with their students, and I have tried to emulate their kindness, compassion, and dedication in my own teaching.

**What do you like to do in your free time? Can you tell us anything about your family and where you are from?**

I grew up in a small seaside town on the south shore of Boston, and I went to Colby College in Maine. I was always a New England girl and, even after living in NYC for the past four-and-a-half years, I am still truly mind blown at the fact that I have become a city girl, let alone a New Yorker. My parents are truly amazed by this turn of events, too. In my free time, which is so fleeting during the school year, I like to travel and try new foods with family and friends.

**Anything else you'd like the Q300 community to know about you?**

There is nothing that I enjoy more than I love teaching, and it is truly an honor to teach your children!

## Moving Forward and Letting Go: A Conversation about the Upper Division.



Personal space at last! Fifth graders Olivia and Celine at their lockers at the Upper Division campus. Photo taken by their classmate, Lila Kennedy.

Wonder what moving from lower to upper division is like? Read this mutual interview between fifth-grader **Lila Kennedy** and parent **Ingrid Bromberg Kennedy**.

### **Ingrid asks Lila:**

#### **What is something that you like about the Upper Division, and what is something you miss about the Lower Division?**

A new thing that I like about school in the middle school building is that we have electives. I like how everyone gets to choose something that they think would be fun, and how everyone goes to a different classroom. This way, we get to meet new people from outside our grade. Also, I kind of like how you don't always get one of your top three choices when we choose electives. That sounds a bit weird, but it allows kids to go outside of their comfort zone and discover new unexpected things that they really enjoy. I say this because for my elective, I didn't get one of my top three choices. Instead, I got Debate, which was my sixth or seventh choice. I didn't really want to do it. But after just one period, I liked it a lot. It was super fun watching the older kids debate and learning how to make an argument and take notes. I also met new kids

that I didn't know before that were above my grade. So I am actually happy that I didn't get something on the top of my list.

Something I miss about the Lower Division is that I knew all the teachers and staff in the old building. Since I had gone through all the grades from kindergarten, I knew all the teachers and the adults who worked in the building. But in the upper division, I only know my fifth grade teachers and my teachers for extracurriculars. It's good to know all the teacher's names and be able to know them well.

**What do you think about your homework this year?**

I think that there is a lot of it, and it is noticeably different in content. For example, we use computers for lots of assignments. This was the first year I have used Google Classroom and have to type up assignments consistently. It's challenging for me to keep track of my homework and I have a bad habit of getting carried away when using the computer for homework. There is also a lot more homework than I am used to. Last year, my homework was due every two weeks, and then a week off, so the upper division's homework schedule is a lot easier to navigate. There is a lot more homework than there was last year because of it. It is a lot to handle and most assignments I don't want to do because it is late at night, often after dinner because of all my after school programs, and I am really tired. But aside from that, I like the homework this year. It's much more consistent than last year and I can plan it all out easily so I know what to do every day.

**How does the organization of your upper division classroom compare to the general classroom organization in the elementary school?**

In the lower division, for most of the grades (except for fourth) we had caddies in the middle of the table holding pencils, erasers, sometimes markers and colored pencils, and post-it notes. In my fifth-grade classroom, the pencils are in a little cup next to an electric pencil sharpener on the teacher's desk. We are supposed to use our pencil's eraser, or bring our own. These are just in case we forget to bring pencils from home. The approach to the classroom organization is different in the middle school than in the elementary. In the lower division, it was all about all the pencils, erasers, and materials needed for classwork to be easily available to the students. But in the upper division, students are expected to bring their own pencils, erasers, and pens from home. The classroom design is more about the teacher being able to efficiently do his or her lesson, and for the children to be able to focus on their classwork without distractions.

Also, in the upper division we have lockers. Many kids in my class got very excited about lockers when we learned that we would have them in the new building. In the lower division, we all had to put our bags in closets. We had to take out specific things in our bags and put them in special places in the classroom. Bags were constantly falling off their hooks in the closets when kids would go back to retrieve a forgotten item. It was very annoying, and kids would be picking up backpacks and putting them on free hooks, and sometimes even on occupied hooks. It was cumbersome and tiring, and no one seemed to have any personal space when it came to storing their stuff. But now we have lockers. We have our own space to store our stuff and decorate as we choose. Sure, some of us have to share our lockers, but our teachers let us choose who we share with, so that isn't much of a problem. So lockers are great.

Overall, I feel that the classroom organization is more grown-up in the upper division, and I am glad that the students have more responsibility.

**Lila asks Ingrid:**

**What do you think about my homework situation as a parent?**

I think there is a lot of it! Last year you didn't have a lot of homework, but this year you do about 45 minutes every evening. When we get home from school I need to remind you to do homework first, then we can do something more fun. I think it will take time to get used to, but hopefully, it will become routine and easier to manage. We have a good system. On Monday we schedule the homework for the rest of the week in your planner. I think it will help you develop good study habits for the future when homework might be harder.

**What differences do you see from the Upper Division to the Lower Division?**

Besides the most obvious - taking you to a different building every day - it feels mostly the same to me. The teachers use Class Dojo to communicate with families and you have two main teachers (math and ELA), etc. The biggest thing I noticed is that you are now the youngest in the school and the kids in the older grades are much more independent. I see them going to school on their own, or with their friends paying attention to their phones. They sign themselves out of the after-school program rather than have a parent do so. It scares me a little for you to be around kids that just go off to McDonalds or someplace else by themselves, but I am also excited for you to become more independent (and to not have to take you to Astoria everyday!). I think seeing kids just a little older than you going places by themselves will make you brave enough to do the same thing when the time comes.

## Meet the Family: Herman, Yi-Wen, and Jason Chen

*Interviewed by Neerja Vasishtha*



Herman, Yi-Wen, and Jason in Alishan, Taiwan during the cherry blossom festival.

Herman, Yi-Wen, and Jason live in Whitestone, Queens. Herman is a data manager and trained as a biostatistician at the NYS Downstate Health Science University. Yi-Wen is a CPA and finance director. They met at the state university of Binghamton where they both attended school.

Their child, Jason, has been at Q300 since he started kindergarten last year. He's six years old and currently in 1st grade. The Chens chose Q300 because it is 1) a citywide G&T school and 2) in Queens! They feel fortunate to have received a seat for Jason since he really enjoys the Q300 student body.

During their downtime at home, this family enjoys playing board games or sports together. Jason has recently taken an interest in tennis and he loves to bike when he can. They also enjoy talking about our days and of course enjoying good TV shows together. Away from home they enjoy road trips and hiking outdoors.

When asked about a “glow” and “grow” for Q300, they responded, “We really appreciate the strong PTA leadership that makes Q300 school an extra special place as a citywide gifted school. We enjoy the enthusiasm of the parents in volunteering in events for the benefit of our kids, which adds to the overall diverse community feel of the school. The school administration and the teachers and staff relations particularly retention need to grow. The leaving of Bonita, our transportation coordinator, has been a big loss to our families who rely on OPT commute option.”

When asked if there was anything else the Chens wanted to share, Herman brought up the daily commute our students make: “Being a citywide school, kids come from all over the five boroughs to attend the school. Commuting by kids has had no or very little newsletter coverage and I would like to share Jason's daily commute from Whitestone to Q300 in recognition of how far many kids had to travel to Q300 from all over NYC. I hope the newsletter will consider making a tradition in the newsletter on kids' commute to recognize

their passion and commitment to the school.” *[Editor’s note: great idea! Parents: send your stories and photos to newsletter@q300.org.]*

### **Jason’s Commute**

“There is no OPT or private bus option where we live. Jason’s daily commute involves bus, car and subway and is usually 2.25 hours round trip on a good day and 3 hours on a bad day. He loves taking the subways and buses. He wakes up around 6:15am and is out of the house before 7am to get to school by 8am. To get to school, Jason takes car/bus and two trains. We are usually rushing to get on the first train (the 7 train) since traffic makes it difficult to predict the time to the subway from home. If the first train is not timed well, there would be a wait for the second train and that would stretch the commute longer and result in lateness to school. Jason is on the first train at the first stop, and oftentimes there are no seats (see picture). On good days, a considerate commuter would give up his/her seat to Jason or the timing with incoming train allows us to grab a seat. Jason is standing most of the time and has to be sheltered from the overcrowding of the train and the pushing and shoving by morning commuters. A couple of times when Jason was trying to exit the train, he got shoved, stepped on, or pulled out of my grasp by impatient passengers entering the train. As a parent, I am always afraid I might lose him during transition on trains. In the evening on the way home, the evening rush hour does not make it any easier. Jason does not usually get home until 7pm or after. Through all this (a 12 hour day and 2.5 hour commute) Jason is still upbeat, although tired at the end of the day. As a parent, seeing a child having to tough out such a long commute while knowing when we were their age we didn’t have to endure what they do, is just heartbreaking.”



An exhausted 5 year-old strap-hanger.

## **Q300 PTA: How Much has Changed**

*by Maura McDermott*

In the spring of 2014, the 100 or so families who elected to send their children to Q300 could not even tour the school, because it did not yet exist.

Q300 would open its doors for the first time that September. At the time, the newly formed school did not yet have a PTA. There was no one to raise funds. No one to arrange community gatherings. No one to bring families together and represent their interests.

Five years later, so much has changed.

With the support of an engaged community of families, the Q300 Parent Teacher Association has provided nearly \$900,000 in financial support for school enrichment programs, teaching assistants, and community events since its founding. The PTA also organizes celebrations for Q300 students, families, teachers and school leaders.

“Q300’s welcoming and energetic PTA has built and sustained an inclusive, engaged school community,” said Mara Cusker Gonzalez, mother of a fifth-grader who has attended the school since its first year. “In addition to being thoughtful and innovative in raising funds and keeping parents informed, the PTA devotes endless hours to making sure we have numerous opportunities every year to come together as a school to share ideas, laugh, and learn from each other.”

In the summer before the school opened, though, the Q300 community of families was starting from scratch, with just two kindergarten classes, two first grade classes and one sixth-grade class.

Some of the families met for the first time in June 2014 at a gathering at Athens Square Park, where children spun each other on the merry-go-round as if they had been friends for years. More gatherings followed, including a picnic in Rainey Park.

An energized group met that fall to select a 16-member PTA executive board. The board quickly drafted bylaws, applied for 501(c)(3) not-for-profit status and began raising money, seeking creative ways to fundraise for enrichments while adhering to Q300’s goals of inclusion, inquiry and responsibility.

At the end of Q300’s second year, the PTA welcomed Principal Vasilios “Bill” Biniaris. Last year, the PTA raised over \$300,000 to provide Upper Division enrichments such as professional development for teachers, enrichment electives, Chromebooks, and other supplies, and Lower Division programs such as art, music and teaching assistants in kindergarten through fourth grade. The PTA also successfully advocated for the New York City-funded renovation of the upper division science lab and the construction of a hydroponic lab.

Third-grade teacher Maria Panagiotakis said her teaching assistant “has enabled me to work closely with students in smaller groups and provide individual attention. They are an invaluable resource.”

Upper division ELA teacher Jean Kim said, “It is great to see the students who are interested in music, drama, or acting shine in new ways during the musical theater elective. The PTA enabled these students to develop their artistic talent in school.”

“The PTA has helped subsidize the Lego robotics elective with purchasing extra kits and materials to help support the overwhelming student interest,” said Scott Waldman, technology teacher in the Upper Division. “The funds that I have received from the PTA s helped me purchase equipment and other items for recess as well as storage units for my classroom. Thank you.”

PTA initiatives such as the Halloween Costume Party, Winter Potluck, and Stepping-into-Summer Dance Party draw cheerful crowds. Events such as Zumba-thons and movie nights also have helped build bridges between the PTA and the parent associations in the buildings Q300 shares with PS 17 and IS 126.



Today, the PTA continues to look for opportunities to build community and strengthen the culture of the school. The annual PTA survey gives families (parents, guardians and middle school students) an opportunity to inform the decision-making of the PTA and the school administration. New initiatives continue to emerge like Park Day in Spring 2019 when the lower division came out to clean up Athens Park and the upper division organized a faculty-student basketball tournament! These initiatives are key to supporting our school and administration in addressing the changing needs of Q300 students.

## Principal's Welcome Letter

Dear Q300 Families,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year. Q300 is such an amazing school, the product of collaboration among all stakeholders, so I am confident you will observe our students' enthusiasm as they continue to love to learn throughout this year! I know that I am encouraged by hearing so many of you validate this thought through your positive feedback during our most recent Meet the Teacher Night. We had so many parents in attendance and it was a wonderful way for teachers to connect with new and returning families.

This year we are continuing our efforts to improve our enrichment programming. Of course, none of these efforts would be possible without the support and funding of our PTA. Through our partnership we have chosen a new vendor, Arts Connection, to provide the programming at our Lower Division. Students will enjoy wonderful opportunities such as music, puppetry, architecture, and chess. Our Upper Division students continue to select their electives such as Debate, Brain Games, Memory Makers, and Musical Theater. I am happy to share that we are pursuing a similar model in grades three and four where our students have already had the opportunity to exercise their voice by selecting their own enrichment opportunities.

Our team's efforts to refine what social and emotional learning looks like are also continuing. We are widening opportunities for training our staff in the use of Sanford Harmony, a program that received a select designation and that was nationally recognized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). We have a plan to also train new staff on the use of the evidence based approach to teaching and discipline known as Responsive Classroom and how to effectively frame classroom and school-wide expectations using Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS). I know this comprehensive approach, in addition to our receptivity to various forms of feedback, will continue to yield the positive student outcomes we all expect from our school.

More often than not our students demonstrate a mastery at being able to acclimate to their new surroundings and peers very quickly. Our wonderful students evidence an ability to work together positively as they rise to the challenges of each school year. Although the arrival of each year delivers a sense of excitement and the unknown for all of us, I am confident that by following our students' lead and working together positively we will have a successful school year. Here's to a great 2019-2020!!

Sincerely,

Bill Biniaris

## Spotlight on Class 202

by Vivian Sicherman (202 Class Parent)



During one of their daily morning meetings, the children were told to touch fingers and greet their classmates in their best alien voices! This was a silly and funny way to get to know each other and it set the tone for a fun day to come.

The children had their introduction to Architecture at the end of the day on Friday, September 27th. They were asked to list various structures in their own home neighborhoods on Post-Its, label them and indicate if each structure is Institutional, Open Space, Commercial or Residential. For example, several children chose to draw the library, which is Institutional, restaurants/stores, which are Commercial, and a park/playground, which is Open Space. All the children then used their Post-Its to get ideas for what they could draw in an accordion book of their individual neighborhoods, called their "Neighborhood Notebooks," which they were able to take home and show to their families. This was a very fun introduction to the topic of Architecture!

Class 202 is looking forward to its first of many class trips. The first one will be to Alley Pond Environmental Center (APEC) on Monday, October 21st, to learn about Forest Ecology. The children will be learning about the eastern deciduous forest right here in Queens, the layers of a forest and energy transfer of its inhabitants. They will also be learning about the anatomy of a tree and the functions of its parts. As with all APEC visits, there will be a nature walk and a live animal demonstration, always fun and interesting for the children!

## Remembering a special parent



In loving memory of Colin Petch

It is with deep sadness, shock, and a heavy heart that we mourn the passing in September of one of the beloved members of our community, Colin Petch, dad to Emily in 4th grade. Colin was certainly one of the most colorful members of the Q300 community and he truly had a heart of gold. He served our community in so many ways - including as a board member, as the lighting designer of the talent shows, as the bus group texting organizer - and so much more. He will be deeply missed. We are still processing and in shock, and will remember more than anything his devotion to his dear Emily and to all of the children at Q300 for whom he passionately and steadfastly advocated.

**SAVE THE DATE**

October 27th, 3-5 PM: Costume Party

November 1st: Picture Day, Lower Division

November 7th: Picture Day, Upper Division

November 5th & 11th: No school

November 12th: Half Day (Parent-Teacher Conferences)

November 21st, 6 PM: PTA Meeting, Lower Division

We welcome your contributions, if you have article ideas or photos for the next newsletter contact Neerja Vasishtha at [newsletter@q300pta.org](mailto:newsletter@q300pta.org).