

Q300

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K-8 Citywide Gifted and Talented School

Principal, I.A. | Sonita Ramkishun
Assistant Principal | Anna Milonakis

**School Leadership Team Special Meeting (Draft)
(Virtual Platform: Google Meet)**

**June 26, 2020
Meeting Minutes**

Members in Attendance:

Sonita Ramkishun (IA Principal), LaShawonna Harris, *Chair* (Parent), Lynn Kennedy (PTA Co-President), Ali Lisberger (UFT), Chidi Amasiani (Teacher), Maria Panagiotakis (Teacher), Kiera Sullivan (Teacher), Sara Clough (Parent), Laura Marks (Parent), Raj Jimenez-Jailall (Parent)

Observer: Anna Milonakis (Assistant Principal)

Invited Guest: Daniel Hildreth (Office of Student Enrollment)

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

II. Introductions/Roles/Rules for the Special Meeting/Survey Results

The agenda and process for this special meeting is explained. We have a list of parents who signed up to comment/ask questions about the diversity proposal, at today's meeting. Daniel Hildreth was invited to today's meeting to help answer questions.

SLT Member Roles for the Special Meeting

Timekeeper: Lynn

Notetaker: Chidi

Parent Panelist manager: Maria

Group Chat: Laura/LaShawonna

The Ground Rules:

- When sharing, be responsible
- Speak about your own experiences and not others
- Stick to an issue, as much as possible
- Maintain a safe platform

- No stereotyping and forms of hate

Daniel Hildreth Introduces Himself

Daniel Hildreth works at the Office of Enrollment Services which serves families and schools. He works directly with kindergarten and G & T admissions. Daniel believes it takes a lot of courage for schools to have these conversations.

Second Survey Results

- 46% Strongly Agree
- 16% Agree
- 15% Disagree
- 21% Strongly Disagree

*There were 267 responses and 197 comments

III. Old Business

Q300 Diversity Proposal: Parent Community Feedback

The SLT is giving parents an additional opportunity to speak on the diversity proposal that was sent out on first on June 15th, 2020 and resent on June 23, 2020 with clarifying letter.

For parents who signed up, the floor is now open for them to speak. Below are their comments, feedback, suggestions, and questions.

- Our core value is inclusion
- To stereotype children based on their heritage is immoral
 - We can do better
- A little disappointed
- The DOE should highlight systematic segregation in NYC for bussing, many people cannot attend or live within walking distance of G&T schools.
- Fair access is needed → OPT must include access to all 5 boroughs
 - *How will these students get to this school?*
- Many families do not have access to G&T testing, due to economic/financial hardship
- The job is not done, the proposal should be sent as is
- As a parent, they agree with the proposal. As a parent leader, opposes sending it out in June.
 - Asks for a minor extension of 30 days to allow parents to fully understand the proposal
 - It will restore confidence in the parents
 - Three days was not enough time to get parent input
- Consider calling it an Integration Plan → **diversity** can be seen as a “code word”
- This is a small step
 - Prolonging this will open the door for more pain
- Proposals can be amended
- Thinks the proposal aligns with our core values
- We have 4 NYCHA residences within Astoria and LIC
 - Committed to working towards unlearning systemic racism

- Oppose, because it did not address the budget
 - Assigning 40% is too high
 - These families cannot contribute to the budget because they are also trying to make ends meet
 - Consider cutting class size in half to achieve student-teacher ratio
 - Include low-income immigrant families, kids who don't speak English regardless of race/background
 - Should receive equal access if not more
 - Consider reserving 25% for this group
- Our nation is undergoing a "reckoning"
- We should listen to everyone with love and compassion
- The school has great values
- The conversations are hard, but necessary
- We have a duty to look at what inclusion means, the school community still has a lot to learn
- 40% is a small step, we should also look at special education, 2e → these are all baby steps
- The core values are what really draws families to our school
- Income should not be a problem, it's not only black/brown families → any person of color, of low income, will benefit from this proposal
- This is just a proposal, and can be adjusted over the years
- If you have privilege, share it.
- The school needs more diversity, but 40% is too big of a number
 - Process seems too rushed; we should involve more parents, *what's the rush?*
 - Funding/budget is key, many Asian families travel for hours and come from low-income families
 - Having a G&T school in another neighborhood will be helpful
 - Think about what is reasonable, let the parents get involved
- Everybody looks at diversity differently
- *Why are parents scared of diversity?*
 - 5% of students in the 8th grade are black/latinx

Q300 Diversity Proposal: Q & A Session with Daniel Hildreth

Parents were also able to type questions in the chat. A few of them were for Daniel.

- Question about using specific race/ethnicity in the wording of the proposal.
 - There's a supreme court ruling that prevents race/ethnicity from being a primary factor in admission
 - It cannot be used unless all other factors have been exhausted
- Q: *Why 40%?* → A: It is just a number, not all schools are using that number; they see lots of percentages; for a school of our size that's 20 seats; what is going to be impactful.
- Q: *What have the results been from the other 4 schools? Have these proposals worked?* → A: Your school may not meet the goal, as not all students will take the seats that are offered.
 - This is experimental, and we won't know what works until we try

- Q: *When does testing begin?* → A: Testing happens in January, there are plans to do summer testing as well
- Q: *Would a 30-day extension impact the proposal?* → A: It is important for G&T schools to have some things settled in place, before testing begins. Early October is when sign-up for testing begins. By October is when we should have the proposal settled. Daniel is willing to work with the school to get us to that point.
 - Getting a legal team to read and review the proposal and a press team to announce it
- Question about the hurdle of access/transportation
 - It is extremely challenging for Q300.
 - There are guidelines, but as a school we should advocate for a change
 - Daniel will support it.
 - It is a matter of overwhelming commute vs. a good education
- Q: *Will the same lottery system be used?* → A: Students will still need to be eligible and meet the criteria, after taking the test
- The main goal is for students to feel safe in the school environment → Sonita plans to get training for all staff.
- We need support and need to lean on the DOE for their supports
- Question posted in the survey results → *What is the process of selecting the criteria?*
 - A: The proposal comes from the school and is up to us what criteria will help the school to reach its diversity goal.
 - The priority groups wouldn't have more priority over another family
 - It doesn't hurt to place an "or" in between each priority group
- The proposal does not have a correlation with Title I funding.

Q300 Diversity Proposal: Recap and Final Thoughts

The remaining questions and comments were addressed.

- We are in a pandemic , and a delay might not really change anything
- Translations of the proposal → as a school and PTA, the surveys all go out in English; the DOE always sends out translations of their documents
 - It is not typical for us to translate the surveys
- Asking questions is very important. The current diversity at the school is not satisfactory
 - It does not allow for developing a very multicultural child
- The community has been very engaged
 - It would have been better to have this discussion in person, before the pandemic

Motion: *Laura* motioned to approve the diversity proposal as is and submit on June 30th, 2020. *Raj* seconded this motion. Three had voted in favor of the motion before a pause was called.

During the pause, it was discussed that perhaps the wording should be changed to explicitly state that changes to the proposal can be made. We came to a consensus that the motion should be reworded to state that amendments can be made after submission of the proposal.

Motion: *Laura* motioned to approve the diversity proposal as is and submit on June 30th, 2020, with the idea that amendments can be made in the future. Chidi seconded this motion. All voted unanimously in favor of the motion; none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:08 PM