



## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • February 16, 2023

### A. In Attendance

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It was noted that (a) parents and other “persons in a parental relation” as defined by NYC Chancellor regulations as designated persons having a relationship to a child or children currently attending Q300 (Parents) and (b) eligible Q300 teachers and instructional staff members who are currently employed on a full-time basis (Staff) at Q300 were present. The total number of Parents and Staff (Members) present was 37. Quorum was reached.

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### B. Call to Order

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Co-Presidents Yvette Choy and Salua Baida called the virtual meeting to order at approximately 6:30 pm ET. Yvette reminded attendees that if they have a question, they may raise their Zoom hand and they will be elevated to speak. Also, attendees may type their question in a Q&A window.

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### C. Principal's Report

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Principal Sonita Ramkishun celebrated Jace, a Q300 fourth grader, who delivered a soapbox presentation about schools wasting too much milk. Jace visited the District 30 office where she delivered her presentation to New York City Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor David Banks about how milk is wasted in the school foods program. Personnel from the Office of Food & Nutrition Services will be visiting various schools to assess the situation and use Jace's solution.

NYC DOE surveys are open and will close on March 31. Q300 is sending home paper surveys as well as instructions in this week's Principal's Message about how to complete the survey online. If you have any questions about completing the survey, please contact Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando at [jenny@q300.org](mailto:jenny@q300.org).

Parent-teacher conferences will be virtual-only and will take place on March 9, which is a half-day for all students. Half-day slips will be going out after the February break. Parent-teacher conference sign-ups will be sent out by email on February 28 at 3:30 p.m. Please check your email as those appointments go fast. If the slots are all taken or do not work for you, please email your child's teacher to set up another date/time.

Q300 is partnering with Global Kids for Upper Division lunch clubs. Global Kids will be hosting two clubs, one called Growing Into Yourself (a version of a Gender and Sexual Alliances (GSA) student club) and one for the arts. Students can sign up for these clubs in-person this week. Parents can also sign their children up; Principal Sonita sent out an email to Upper Division families with more details.

There is no school February 20-24. Have a restful and fun break.

In response to questions from PTA members, Principal Sonita gave the following responses.

Q: Is it true that each lunch costs \$1.50 per student?

A: Q300 does not get that kind of breakdown. Q300 students do not pay for lunch.

Q: What Resolution A (Reso A) funding did Q300 apply for? (Reso A projects are school-specific capital improvement or enhancement projects that are funded by individual grants from New York City Council Members or Borough Presidents.)

A: Parents have been asking about the Lower Division bathrooms. Three years ago we received a \$1 million grant from former Assemblywoman Aravella Samotis to upgrade our gym, cafeteria and lunchroom to get air conditioning. The next step is for a designer to come in to assess the site. The upgrade will be a long process.

Principal Sonita is working with PS17 Principal Rebecca Heyward to make sure the upgrade gets done. At the Upper Division, the \$350,000 bathroom upgrade is in progress. The bathroom has been surveyed. The girls' bathroom will be totally renovated and will include a single-stall bathroom. The adults' bathroom will be upgraded with any remaining funds. Principal Sonita is hopeful that this work can be done over the summer. In terms of Reso A funding for this year, Principal Sonita along with Principal Heyward and IS126 Principal Alexander Angueira, respectively, submitted a request for auditorium chairs at the Lower Division and Upper Division, upgrades in the media system at the Upper Division, cafeteria upgrades in both buildings (in the Upper Division, so there can be a community space instead of the rectangular tables, and in the Lower Division, so there can be a brighter space). Principal Sonita also submitted a request for new lockers for the Upper Division since many lockers are broken. District 30 Community Education Council (CEC) member Fatima Lakrafl, Q300's CEC liaison, visited, observed the many broken lockers, and promised to advocate for this renovation. Principal Sonita also requested books for the Upper Division and library space for the Lower Division, as well as bathroom upgrades for the Lower Division. Last year Principal Sonita had made a similar request but it remained unfulfilled. On a related note, Principal Sonita has asked the Lower Division custodian to use better products in the bathrooms so they are more refreshed and smell better. The only ventilation in the student bathrooms in the Lower Division is a window; the adult bathrooms do not have ventilation at all.

Q: Will Summer Rising be happening at Q300 this summer?

A: To date, Principal Sonita has received no guidance with respect to Summer Rising.

Q: Is Q300 accepting book donations?

A: It depends on the level. Please reach out to Principal Sonita if you have books you would like to donate, and let her know the level. She will get back to you as to whether the school will accept the books.

Q: Can Q300 have another book swap this year?

A: Yes – Sonita will speak with Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando to determine what day is best for Lower Division. Last year, the eighth graders organized a book swap for Upper Division and it is anticipated that this will happen again this year.

Q: When is Field Day?

A: Field Day will be June 2, June 5 and June 6. Q300 is working on permits for the event. Principal Sonita will let the grades know what date they will be assigned. There is generally one date for Lower Division, one date for Upper Division (excepting eighth grade), and one date for eighth grade.

Q: Who decides the menu for school lunch, and is there a way for students or parents to submit feedback about school lunch?

A: The Upper Division students had the opportunity to submit feedback through a survey. The Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS) advises that a new survey will be coming out and that they want to ensure that student voices are heard. OFNS invited Class 401 to taste some food options. Council Member Tiffany Cabán will likely be forming some working groups around different issues. One issue that came up during participatory budgeting was healthier school lunches. If you are interested in that topic, be on the lookout for more information from her. School Food Service Manager Nicole Pujols was not able to attend this meeting, but we will try to bring her back next month.

Q: Will Q300 participate in the scratch food initiative, a pilot program to provide foods that are freshly cooked on-site?

A: Please provide more information about the initiative.

Q: Is Q300 only using i-Ready for reading assessments this year?

A: In the past, Q300 used Acadience for reading. This year, Principal Sonita selected i-Ready. The teachers and Principal Sonita formed small groups to look at the i-Ready data and determine what areas need more work and

what areas can be accelerated. In June, Q300 will use i-Ready in grades K-8 for both math and reading. The goal is not just to do an assessment, but to use i-Ready as a diagnostic tool to inform and plan for instruction.

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#### **D. President's Report**

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Co-President Yvette Choy reported that Principal Sonita Ramkishun did a mid-year review with Ed Miller, the Senior Manager of ArtsConnection. ArtsConnection is an arts/music enrichment vendor that works with the Lower Division and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade on programs such as painting, musical theater, recorder and ukelele. As a result of feedback about the Fall ArtsConnection program, Principal Sonita and Ed decided to transition from the trimester plan to a semester plan so students would be able to dive deeper into their enrichments. There will be another arts enrichment showcase in May. Co-President Salua Baida reported that in the next few weeks, parents will be receiving a survey from the PTA about the enrichment programs.

Salua reported that she and Yvette had brought to Principal Sonita and the District 30 Presidents' Council questions from parents about why the Teachers College reading program is still being used for some of the lower grades at Q300. The DOE is moving away from the Teachers College reading program due to various concerns. Principal Sonita has kept the program for several reasons, including that the majority of students entering Q300 have a strong reading foundation and that the program offers flexibility which enables the school to provide differentiation to more advanced students. Q300 supplements the Teachers College reading program with Heggerty Phonemic Awareness and Foundations. Other programs include Epic and Reading A-Z. Principal Sonita is looking into which of these programs she can obtain DOE funding for; she may ask the PTA for funding support if she cannot get DOE funding. Executive Vice President Patrick Nau said that he would reach out to some of the other Citywide G&T schools to see what reading programs they are using, and promised to report back.

Salua reported that 20 of the Chromebooks that were delivered to the Upper Division were not the right model. The PTA is working on getting a partial refund for those Chromebooks. The remaining 59 Chromebooks work well and will be used in the Upper Division.

Yvette reported that Principal Sonita and PS17 Principal Heyward have obtained a Reso A grant to renovate certain shared spaces in the Lower Division building, as well as the air conditioning in the auditorium which is currently not functioning.

Yvette asked Principal Sonita about plans to comply with the class size bill, which was signed into law by New York Governor Hochul. Within the next five years, the DOE must meet the new classroom cap. Class sizes will be capped at 20 students per class for grades K-3, 23 for grades 4-8, and 25 for high school. So far, the plan is that for every admissions year for the next five years, admissions will be capped. Executive Vice President Patrick Nau reported that the UFT is currently negotiating with the DOE over logistics, including how additional teachers will be hired and how this will affect school funding.

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#### **E. Treasurer's Report**

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Sophia Peng delivered the Treasurer's Report. As of January 31, 2023, the PTA had a total inflow of approximately \$23,000, most of it from the Direct Appeal, and a total outflow of approximately \$63,000, most of it for Teachers Assistants (TAs) and enrichments. The net cash outflow for January was approximately \$40,000. Sophia also delivered the interim financial report. The total income for the first half of our fiscal year is approximately \$200,000. The bulk of our collections have been through the Direct Appeal, but we have also collected through other fundraisers. The total expenses for the same period is approximately \$182,000. The biggest expenditures are for enrichments and TAs.

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#### **F. School Leadership Team (SLT) Report**

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SLT parent member Alisha Arthur gave an overview of the SLT's February 8, 2023 meeting. The following are highlights:

1. The SLT approved the minutes of its previous meeting. SLT minutes are available for the public to view on the Q300 website and on the PTA website.
2. Leslie Cano from Global Kids was a guest at the SLT meeting. Leslie reported that Global Kids will start lunch clubs at the Upper Division after February break. They will be focusing on art and LGBTQ+ initiatives.
3. SLT student member Luka gave the student report. Luka reported that the Upper Division students were able to raise enough funds for their dance, which took place on February 10. Respect for All week is happening this week.
4. The SLT has been working on a fact sheet concerning Q300's initiative in increasing diversity of Q300's student population. The final document will be added to the Q300 website.
5. The SLT reviewed the mid-year i-Ready data for grades K-8. The SLT has split up into academic groups to review this data.
6. The SLT discussed what topics it wants to focus on for next year's goal.
7. The SLT discussed the book Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind, which is being read by SLTs across District 30. The SLT discussed recommendations to turn students into co-creators. The SLT came up with great ideas that they want to explore at Q300. The teachers in particular have some amazing ideas.
8. The following reports were given at the February 8, 2023 SLT meeting: Principal's report, UFT report, and PTA report. UFT continues to oppose Success Academy co-locations in the district.

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## G. Committee Report

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1. Co-Membership Vice President Erica Soto Eng reported that Kindness Challenge kicked off on Monday and will run until classes resume after February break. The Kindness Challenge is an out-of-school initiative where the various grade bands are encouraged to brainstorm together ways they can gather the students to perform acts of service. In the past, grades have collected food to donate to a women's and children's organization in Flushing, cleaned up a park, and made cards for God's Love We Deliver. More information is posted on the PTA website under "Kindness Challenge." The PTA hopes to hold this year's Stepping Into Summer Party and Auction in-person. If you are interested in helping with this, please reach out to [auction@q300pta.org](mailto:auction@q300pta.org) or to Joanna Holzman at [joannaH@q300pta.org](mailto:joannaH@q300pta.org).
2. Yvette read the report from Co-Fundraising Committee Vice Presidents Christina Lee and Lisa Christopher. The Aigner Chocolates and the popcorn fundraisers brought in \$400. The Summer Camp auction brought in \$5,800. The Little Caesar's pizza and cookies fundraiser is currently taking place and is running through March 4, 2023. Tickets are on sale now for the New York International Children's Film Festival. The PTA gets \$3 for every ticket purchased. In order for the PTA to get the money, you must select "Q300 30<sup>th</sup> Ave School" from the "Select My School" menu. The festival takes place March 3, 2023-March 12, 2023. Thank you for submitting artwork to the Square 1 Arts fundraiser. The order catalogs will be coming out at the end of March. Box Tops is still happening. You can download the Box Tops app and scan your grocery receipt. Every receipt that is scanned for Q300 is a chance to win \$500 at the end of the month. Amazon Smile is ending February 20, 2023. Q300 will be holding its first Scholastic bookfair in the spring. If you are interested in volunteering for that event, please email [fundraising@q300pta.org](mailto:fundraising@q300pta.org). The PTA is bringing back the student t-shirt design competition. If you are interested in volunteering for the t-shirt design competition, including by promoting it or distributing flyers, please email [fundraising@q300pta.org](mailto:fundraising@q300pta.org). Snapology, which is a Lego-based robotics and coding organization, has a new location in Long Island City. They are offering 20% off to all Q300 families for any of their summer camps. Their promotion is good through March 31, 2023. Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando will share the details for that. Camp Kimama Half Moon is also offering a 20% discount to all Q300 families. Jenny will also share details for that.
3. Direct Appeal Co-Chair David Wang reported on the Direct Appeal. The Direct Appeal is now shifting to "March Madness" where the focus will be on increasing our participation rate. In 2014, the Direct Appeal

had a 79% participation rate, which we would like to at least match. Thank you for those who have donated. For those who have not, there is still time.

4. Co-Vice President of Community Affairs Christine Serdjenian-Yearwood announced that the Q300 and PS17 PTAs will be co-hosting another movie night on March 17. The PTA collected donations for asylum-seeking families. Thank you to everyone who donated; there will be another opportunity to donate. If you have anything you would like to bring in, please bring it to Jenny Lando's office by February 28; Upper Division families can drop off items at the IS126 office if you say you have items for "Zone 126." IS126 has been very appreciative of the donations. There are three Western Queens Town Hall meetings that will be held over the February break for those looking to become more involved in school funding issues. Look for more information in Principal Sonita's upcoming Principal's Report.
5. Lower Division Vice President Nick Skolnick thanked those who volunteered at Winter Fest. If you need help setting up a Kindness Challenge activity for your grade band, please reach out to Nick at [NickS@q300pta.org](mailto:NickS@q300pta.org).
6. Upper Division Vice President Ellie Rabinovich reported that there is remaining line item funding for the grades (for field trips, etc.) in the budget. There is some separate field trip funding that is individualized for the grade levels. Ellie and Nick will be cascading that information to class parents so that the money can be spent before the end of the year.
7. Rachana Shah reported on recent Green Team updates. Queens Curbside composting will resume the week of March 27. The Q300 Green Team has been selected to receive a 2023 Community Leader grant from Citizens NYC. This grant will be used to create engagement around Earth Week, do some planting (including possibly getting planters for our school), hold some climate games, and potentially offer nature-based field trips. Thank you to the Green Team who dedicated time and energy to apply for that funding. If you are interested in being part of the Green Team, please contact Rachana Shah.

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## H. Approval of the Minutes

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A motion was made to approve the January 19, 2023 general membership minutes with one amendment noted by Kate Swearengen. The motion was seconded. The Members then present approved the motion.

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## I. New Business

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Erica Soto-Eng noted that a number of parents had put together a list of Black History Month events and resources. The list is posted on the PTA website at <https://q300pta.org/2023/02/01/black-history-month-2023-events-and-resources>.

Yvette Choy thanked, on behalf of fourth grade parent Lisa, those who purchased roses for the fourth graders' fundraiser for their stepping up ceremony.

Erica thanked Lisa and Christina for putting together a beautiful Valentine's Day display at the Upper and Lower Division for teachers and staff.

Thank you to all of those who came together to make Winter Fest 2023 happen.

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## J. Adjournment

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The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm ET. The next general membership meeting will be held on March 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm ET on a virtual platform.

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David William Wang & Kate Swearengen, Co-Secretaries