



## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • June 22, 2023

---

### A. In Attendance

---

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 56. Quorum was reached.

---

### B. Call to Order

---

The virtual meeting was called to order at approximately 6:35 pm ET.

---

### C. PTA Board Elections

---

A motion was made and carried to add Keri Goldman to the Election Committee. Election Committee members serve as neutral observers and ensure there is a fair election process. They cannot run for office themselves. The other Election Committee members are Kevin Gallagher and Raechel McCarthy.

Kevin explained that nominations would be taken for the floor. Nominations made prior to the meeting will be read out and nominated for the floor. There are three types of positions open: (1) positions that were not filled last month, which include Executive Vice-President and Vice-President for Community Affairs; (2) positions where individuals elected last month resigned for various reasons, including Executive Vice President and Vice-President of Communications; and (3) positions that are eligible to be co-positions and where only one individual was elected last month, including President and Vice-President of Membership. The present holders of those positions have indicated they are open to running as a team if anyone is interested in those positions.

Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando stated that all individuals present, with the exception of her and Vice-Principal Anna Milonakis, were eligible to vote in the election.

Kevin announced that nominations would be taken for all of the positions and a single poll would be launched at the end for voting. Kevin encouraged members to use the chat function to make nominations and to confirm that nominated members are interested in being elected for the position.

Yvette Choy was nominated for the position of Executive Vice-President. There were no additional nominees.

Salua Baida and Janet Perez were nominated as co-Vice-Presidents of Community Affairs. There were no additional nominees.

Betty Ruan was nominated as the Vice-President of Communications. There were no additional nominees.

Lisa Christopher and Christina Lee were nominated as co-Vice-Presidents of Fundraising. There were no additional nominees.

No one expressed interested in being nominated as co-officer for the positions of President and Vice-President of Membership.

All nominees were elected. The newly elected officers are as follows: Yvette Choy as Executive Vice-President, Salua Baida and Janet Perez as Vice-Presidents of Community Affairs, Betty Ruan as Vice-President of Communications, and Lisa Christopher and Christina Lee as Vice-Presidents of Fundraising.

---

## **D. Co-Presidents' Report**

---

Co-President Yvette Choy thanked the 2022-2023 PTA Executive Board for their leadership and hard work. Yvette also thanked the class parents and other volunteers for their contributions. Co-President Salua Baida echoed that thanks and also thanked the Q300 Administration and staff for their collaboration.

---

## **E. Co-Treasurers' Report**

---

Sophia Peng delivered the Treasurer's Report and presented the 2022-2023 Annual Budget Report. The PTA started the year with a healthy budget reserve that has increased over the years since the 2014-2015 school year. For this past year, the reserve decreased by \$41,000. For the past year, as consistent with past years, most revenue has come from the Direct Appeal. This year, we raised \$201,000 of the budget target of \$240,000 for the Direct Appeal. We raised a gross total out of \$76,000 (netting \$31,000) out of the \$107,000 targeted goal from fundraising events. Overall, we projected almost \$350,000 in revenue but ended up closer to \$280,000. From a cash outflow perspective, we had budgeted spending \$450,000 on the academic/enrichment side but ended up closer to \$260,000. While we had budgeted the hiring of 8 teaching assistants (TAs), the Administration had difficulty hiring TAs. As a result, instead of spending \$220,000 on TAs, we spent about \$70,000. We budgeted almost \$20,000 for teacher wish lists but so far, only about \$8,000 has been spent. The PTA had budgeted \$120,000 for Lower Division enrichments and \$80,000 for Upper Division enrichments. Actual expenditures were \$106,000 and \$65,000, respectively. We had budgeted \$6,000 for PTA operating expenses and spent about \$3,000. In sum for the 2022-2023 budget, we spent \$40,000 more than we raised. This number may change a bit because we are still receiving check requests.

The Lower Division enrichment programs were the following: ArtsConnection (art, music, and theater), Architecture (for Second Grade), Chess and Robotics, and Dance (via Alvin Ailey). We also supported recess activities through Asphalt Green and provided support for the Kindergarten stepping up ceremony and Fourth Grade graduation.

The Upper Division enrichment programs were the following: ArtsConnection, Chess, and Astoria Film Festival. We sponsored the Math Club and the Debate Club. We also supported the following electives: Life Skills, Shakespeare, Ultimate Frisbee, Knitting, Memory Maker, and Spelling Bee.

We also supported field trips. In addition to the 8th grade graduation field trips and the "catch up" trips for the two grades that missed the fifth-grade field trips because of the pandemic, we also sponsored special curriculum-based field trips, including those to MoMath, DNA Learning Center, Carousel's Press and SPYSCAPE. We also provided graduation funds to the Eighth Grade for their yearbook.

We held the following fundraiser events: Fun Run, Summer Readathon, Fall Costume Party, WinterFest, Book Fair, Stepping Into Summer, Zumbathon (joint with PS 17) and Movie Nights (joint with PS 17). We held the following shopping-driven fundraisers: Thanksgiving Pies, Gift Cards, School Pictures, Square 1 Arts, Chuck E. Cheese, Flower Power, Chocolates, shopping sites like Amazon Smile (which is being discontinued), and the Q300 t-shirt design contest.

Finally, we generated about \$3,700 in bank interest and paid payment processing fees through PayPal and Venmo.

Maria Hantzopoulos noted that theater in the Upper Division was paid via a CUNY Creative Arts Team (CAT) grant that was applied for by Upper Division teachers Laura Parris and Jean Kim and by Q300 parent Maria Hantzopoulos. However, the PTA may need to absorb this in future years if the grant is not renewed.

In response to a question about the private bus line in the PTA budget, Sophia clarified that the PTA acts as a pass through by collecting registration funds from parents who want to participate in the private bus. Those funds sit in our bank account but are not provided by the PTA itself.

Yvette Choy shared that the PTA funded two author visits and a Juneteenth speaker (for both the Upper and Lower Divisions) through teachers' wish lists and Diversity Committee budget lines.

Sophia explained that the Direct Appeal revenue, while lower than the goal, was higher than it had been the previous two years, primarily because the PTA had increased the amount of the suggested donation from pandemic rates. While fundraising was not as high as targeted, we were actually more profitable than anticipated, as we only spent 33% of the budget due to the Administration's difficulty in hiring TAs.

Sophia then moved to a discussion of the proposed budget for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year. The proposed budget sets a goal of \$230,000 for the Direct Appeal. It budgets \$240,000 for TAs (assuming two TAs for each grade from Kindergarten through Second Grade, one TA for Third Grade, and one TA for Fourth Grade). The hourly rate for a TA is \$20/hour. It budgets \$10,000 for school supplies and professional development and \$19,100 for teacher wish lists. The teacher wish lists provide up to \$550 for each teacher to buy supplies for their classroom. We are budgeting for enrichments in the Upper and Lower Division at roughly the same level as last year. We are budgeting approximately \$5,000 in operating expenses which covers insurance, licenses for some accounting software and Auctria, and budgets for the Diversity, Wellness and Green Committees.

For the coming year, we are projecting to continue to spend into our reserves.

Looking at PTA budgets from 2019 to present, in terms of distribution of academic and enrichment expenditures, the TAs continue to be about 50% of what we are projecting to spend. On the enrichment side, we are keeping roughly the same ratios between the Upper and Lower Divisions.

In response to a question about whether the PTA would have dipped into reserves in 2022-2023 if the target number of TAs had been hired, Sophia said yes and that was the intent, and that the goal was to continue to draw down on the reserves.

Charles Lee asked for additional TA support for the Third Grade given teacher changes midway through Second Grade during the 2022-2023 school year. Yvette explained the PTA always aspires to hire eight TAs, and that we have budgeted for that goal. The PTA cannot hire TAs itself. Principal Sonita must review resumes, interview, and do the hiring. The PTA's job is to make sure there is money in the budget to pay them. Yvette explained that the PTA is in the process of putting in place a TA Outreach Committee whose goal will be to tap into resources such as universities with education departments in order to establish a relationship and perhaps a permanent source of TA candidates. Anyone who is interested in joining this committee should get in touch with David Wang.

Erica Soto-Eng asked if it was financially possible to provide funding for two TAs for the Third Grade, instead of one TA for the two classes to share. Yvette said that the priority is to provide TAs for each class in Kindergarten through Second Grade due to their developmental needs, but that they understood why a second TA in Third Grade would be beneficial given what happened to this year's Second Graders.

In response to an anonymous comment in the chat that the individual would like to see more money spent on math teams, science teams, academics and music programs, Yvette noted that the PTA has already committed to pay for tournament fees and competitions.

For the various in-school enrichments, the PTA researches vendors and informs the Administration. The Administration consults with the vendors and negotiates arrangements with them. The PTA's Enrichment Committee sends out a survey every year asking for input from parents, Upper Division students, and teachers concerning the enrichments they would like to see in the future. The Enrichment Committee reviews this data and then researches vendors. Principal Sonita then speaks with the various vendors to determine if they can offer appropriate programming for our school given schedules and other factors. While the enrichment surveys inform the Administration, Administration ultimately decides what the enrichment offerings will be and who will provide them. If you are interested in being involved in the Enrichment Committee, please contact Maria Hantzopoulos at [enrichment@q300pta.org](mailto:enrichment@q300pta.org) or [MariaH@q300pta.org](mailto:MariaH@q300pta.org).

Discussion on the budget was tabled so that the Principal's Report could proceed. Following the Principal's Report, a suggestion was made to amend the proposed budget to add funding for a second TA for Third Grade. Sophia Peng reported that the cost of an additional TA for Third Grade would be approximately \$30,000, and that the amended proposed TA budget would be \$270,000, up from \$240,000. It would bring the projected budget shortfall from \$193,000 to \$223,000. Discussion was held. During that discussion, a parent raised the issue of proportionality between the Upper and Lower Division and commented that approximately 88% of the budget was for the Lower Division. The same parent noted that the Upper Division has a dedicated art teacher while the

Lower Division does not. The parent noted that she was supportive of the amendment but thought it merited further discussion, and expressed her hope that the parent body continue to support initiatives in the Upper Division, particularly in light of the two Upper Division teachers who are leaving and are not being replaced. The parent further noted that approximately 75% of the incoming Third Grade families noted in the enrichment surveys that they wanted two TAs. The parent was thanked for highlighting the issue of disproportionality. Another parent added that this was not a precedent, this was a one-time need and that the Second Graders had had a tumultuous year and that the Second Graders had started Kindergarten in a pandemic year (September 2020). A parent added that there was a TA in Fifth Grade once several years ago because of a need. A parent said that she supported the amendment but encouraged parents that in later years, when being asked for money, parents should have a holistic all for one, one for all attitude. A parent asked the PTA to consider spending money in the fall for an external vendor for Math and Debate Club coaches if that turns out to be a need. Yvette said that they had discussed the issue previously with Principal Sonita and that Sonita wants to offer this opportunity to Q300 staff members first. The parent asked if the PTA could fund an internal coach. A parent said there may be two ways to pay internal coaches, either on a per-session basis or directly.

Sophia accepted the suggestion to amend the proposed budget.

A parent asked if a TA could be provided for every classroom where a teacher would be on a leave of absence. A parent responded that if such a need arose, the PTA could consider the issue then and respond appropriately. Another parent noted that this is just the initial budget and a vote on the final budget would be held in September 2023.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the budget as amended. The motion carried.

A parent thanked Sophia for jumping into the Treasurer's role in her family's first year in the school, for delving into the details, for mastering the budget process, and for giving a tremendous presentation

---

## **F. Principal's Report**

---

Principal Sonita Ramkishun gave the Principal's Report.

Principal Sonita thanked the PTA and families for an amazing school year. The graduation and stepping up ceremonies were amazing thanks to the collaboration between Q300 staff members and families. Principal Sonita is looking forward to an amazing 2023-2024 school year. The last day of school is June 27, 2023 and it is a full day of school. If your child will be missing school, please email their teacher so their attendance can be accurately recorded. If your child's dismissal plans change, please let their teacher know.

Principal Sonita opened the floor to questions. If a member does not have the opportunity to ask a question tonight, please email [principal@q300.org](mailto:principal@q300.org) and Principal Sonita will respond as soon as she can.

A parent asked if there was an update on hiring teachers for Second Grade. Principal Sonita responded that she was looking for a teacher with a license for Birth-Two or Kindergarten-Sixth Grade. She is in the process of interviewing candidates but has not identified a candidate to hire yet.

A parent asked if students who had accepted an offer from Q300 could be invited to the Welcome Breakfast. Principal Sonita responded that the Welcome Breakfast would focus on all Kindergarten students who had accepted their offers, even if they had not yet registered. A separate Q&A session will be held for admitted students in First, Second, Third and Fourth Grade, and they will be welcomed at the Back-to-School picnic in September.

A parent asked about the plans for Sixth Grade in the upcoming school year given that two Upper Division teachers are leaving. Principal Sonita responded that each teacher will be teaching two grades. For example, one math teacher will teach two grades, whether 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. She will be able to share additional details in the beginning of August once the organizational chart is finalized. No one will be teaching more than one subject. Each teacher will be teaching 3-4 sections each. Classes whose teachers take leaves of absence will be covered by long-term substitutes. As things change, Principal Sonita will advise families. Principal Sonita will send out the final organizational chart to families in mid- to late-August. Finally, the Fifth and Sixth Graders will have the opportunity to participate in the hydroponics lab this year, which they were not able to do previously.

A parent expressed that the Math Team has been a wonderful experience for students and asked that the Administration and PTA find a way to continue to support it. Principal Sonita responded that supporting the Math Team was a priority for her and that she had been in conversations with teachers, Global Kids, and the PTA about continuing the Math Team (and the Debate Team) and that she would have more clarity in early fall.

A parent asked if there would be a difference in the Fifth-Grade academic model between this year and next year. Principal Sonita responded that there would be no difference and that students would not lose any instructional time. This year, Upper Division teachers did not have a full teaching load and that they will have a fuller scheduler this upcoming year. The parent stated that she had attended the last School Leadership Team (SLT) meeting and had heard Principal Sonita say there would be a difference in the Fifth-Grade academic model. Principal Sonita responded that the Fifth Graders would still get their homeroom teachers, an ELA teacher, one math teacher and one science teacher. She said the difference was that they would get an enriched science experience because they would have their science classes in the hydroponics lab instead of in their homeroom. They will be receiving science instruction from a specialized teacher instead of from their homeroom teacher. Instructionally, nothing is changing. As of now, teacher assignments have not been finalized and are subject to change.

A parent thanked Principal Sonita for her leadership and for the time she is spending on the budget issue. The parent asked how many more classes the Upper Division teachers would be taking on this coming academic year versus last year. Principal Sonita responded that their schedules would be fuller but that they would not be teaching more than they are required to. This year, teachers had three sections. Next year, they will have four sections. The parent asked how teachers are compensated for their time spent as coaches for afterschool programs. Principal Sonita responded that, using the Math Team as an example, which meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour and a half each day, teachers put in a time sheet for their time spent and are paid for it. Vacancies for coach positions are posted. Principal Sonita creates the posting, teachers apply to the posting, and Sonita selects the teacher(s). It is possible to share the posting with the Superintendent so staff members at other schools can apply, but Q300 staff members have priority. Principal Sonita confirmed that the PTA can contribute to fund after school coaching if there is not enough money for it in the DOE budget. Finally, the parent said that many schools in Manhattan have afterschool sports teams and asked what obstacles existed, if any, to having such teams at Q300. Principal Sonita responded she had begun conversations with IS 126 about this, as that school has a sports team. She has also spoken to Global Kids, which is willing to provide a coach for a Q300 team. If those conversations do not bear fruit, Principal Sonita plans to work with the Enrichment Committee to identify vendors to support that initiative. The goal is to get a sports program for the Upper Division. We were able to do this for the Lower Division this year and it was exciting and fun.

A parent asked if Principal Sonita would support an additional TA for the Third-Grade next academic year. Traditionally, the two Third Grade classes have shared a single TA. Principal Sonita said that she was open to the idea so long as there was sufficient funding and so long as Q300 was able to attract sufficient qualified candidates. If there is an insufficient number of qualified candidates, Kindergarten-Second Grade will be prioritized.

Principal Sonita advised that Dr. Philip Composto would be retiring as District 30 Superintendent. There is no information as of yet as to who will take his place.

An anonymous parent stated in the chat that their Lower Division student was not learning much Spanish. Principal Sonita advised the parent to email her and that she would set up a time to discuss the parent's concerns.

A parent asked Principal Sonita what surprised her the most this school year. Principal Sonita responded that she was most surprised by how quickly the school year had passed, and by the number of things we were able to do this year thanks to the support of families and staff members. The parent agreed and noted that his son who was part of Q300's first Kindergarten class would be graduating from Eighth Grade this year and that nine years had gone by quickly.

A parent spoke to the importance of having a second TA for the Third Grade, due to the fact that Second Grade had no TA for the first half of the year, large class sizes and issues with students listening. Principal Sonita responded that Second Grade was the only class this year with TAs and that the Second Graders were never left without support because paraprofessionals supported the classes. She reiterated that she is open to having two TAs in Third Grade, but that Kindergarten-Second Grade will be prioritized for TAs.

Principal Sonita said that if anyone had additional questions, to email her at [principal@q300.org](mailto:principal@q300.org). She and Jenny Lando will be available during different days this summer to answer questions. Please be patient if you email them; they will get back to you. Thank you for your time and enjoy your summer.

---

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

---

SLT parent member Maria Hantzopoulos reported that an SLT meeting was held on June 7. The SLT passed the minutes. The Student Report was given, during which it was reported that the Student Council raised \$2,000 for its Light the Night fundraiser for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and that Upper Division students helped out with the Lower Division Field Day and had a good time. The SLT finalized its Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals. Once that is input into the system, it will be shared with the school community. The SLT met in five different groups informed by the Chancellor's priorities. The groups/priorities include Reading; Socio-Emotional; Math, Science and Social Studies; College and Career Day; and Parent Engagement. Those priorities change every year. Those goals will be revisited in September and then shared. During the Principal's Report, Principal Sonita shared the staffing changes previously discussed as well as some of the curriculum changes, she previously shared in her Principal's Notes, particularly with math and ELA and, for reading in grades K-5, the transition to HMH Intro to Reading (which will be supplemented with culturally responsive books and texts).

---

### **H. Committee Report**

---

1. Membership Vice President Erica Soto-Eng thanked those involved in the Stepping Into Summer Auction. The Book Swap will be taking place on Monday, June 26. Please look around your homes and see if there are some books your kids have outgrown and would like to donate to their classmates. You may donate up to five. If you have time to volunteer at the Book Swap, please email Erica by contacting her at her personal email address, responding to her Google group message about the Book Swap, or contacting her on WhatsApp.
  2. Yvette Choy reported for the Fundraising Committee that the Summer Readathon will be taking place again this summer.
  3. Co-Vice President of Community Affairs Christine Serdjenian-Yearwood thanked Janet Perez for her work on events with PS 17, the Green Team for its compositing initiative, Lynn Kennedy for her work on participatory budgeting and with PS 17. The Community Affairs Committee organized two great clothing drives with Astoria Food Pantry/Free Store Astoria and Zone 126. Thank you to everyone who donated. Thank you to all the volunteers for Movie Nights. Thank you to the Diversity Team for their Movie Night suggestions. Thank you to Councilmember Tiffany Cabán's office for the CASA after school program. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Zumbathon. Thank you to Yvette Choy and Salua Baida for your leadership. It was a great year for Community Affairs. Thank you to everyone who supported us.
  4. Lower Division Co-Vice President Mauricio Lopez Campero welcomed Erica Soto Eng as Lower Division Representative and thanked her for all her work on behalf of the PTA. He also thanked the Class Parents for spreading the word and soliciting volunteers for various initiatives.
- 

### **I. Approval of the Minutes**

---

A motion was made to approve the May 25 general membership minutes, as amended. The motion was seconded. The Members then present approved the motion.

---

### **J. New Business**

---

Salua Baida reported that Epic, the reading software, and academic resource, would be available free of charge during the summer between 7:00 a.m. from 3:00 p.m. Please reach out to your student's teacher and ask them to create a teacher account and share the teacher code with families. Yvette Choy thanked the Board for its work and support over the past school year. Have a relaxing and joyful summer, and let's hit the ground running in

September. Mauricio Lopez Campero thanked Yvette for their leadership. Ellie Rabinowitz thanked David Wang and the Direct Appeals team for their work on the Direct Appeal, which funds so much of what the PTA does.

---

#### **K. Adjournment**

---

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm ET. The next general membership meeting will be held on September 28, 2023 at 6:30 pm ET on a virtual platform.

---

Kate Swearengen & David William Wang, Co-Secretaries