



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • October 26, 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 60. Quorum was reached.

B. Call to Order and Elections

The virtual meeting was called to order at approximately 6:35 pm ET. Co-Secretary David Wang announced that there is a robust PTA Board and this evening some of the vacancies will be filled through a PTA Board election. Afterwards, there will be an election for the vacant School Leadership Team (SLT) parent member position. David solicited members to serve on the Election Committee. The Election Committee observes the elections to ensure they are run fairly. Members of the Election Committee cannot be candidates for PTA office. Alyssa Duvall and Ellie Rabinovich volunteered to serve on the Election Committee. A motion was made for Alyssa and Ellie to serve on the Election Committee, along with Kevin Gallagher. The motion was seconded and carried.

Kevin announced that the PTA’s goal is to administer a fair election. There are four positions open tonight: Upper Division Representative, Lower Division Representative, Co-Vice President of Membership and Co-Vice President of Communications. Following elections for those positions, there will be an election for the vacant SLT parent member position, which is a two-year position.

If there is more than one candidate for a position, each of the candidates will be given 90 seconds to introduce themselves and explain why they are the best candidate for the position. Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando has validated that everyone present, except for one individual who Kevin has messaged privately, is eligible to vote. Teachers are PTA members and can vote for the PTA positions but not for the SLT parent position.

The first open position is Co-Lower Division Representative. Three candidates for that position were nominated earlier in the week. They are Lucy Han, Jeanne Blanco and Alisha Arthur. The floor is open for additional nominations for that position. Any candidate for the position should be the parent or guardian of a student in grades K-5 and should be able to represent the Lower Division of the school. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else, please type it into the chat or raise your virtual hand you will be elevated. No additional nominations were made. Lucy and Jenny made oral statements and a written statement was read on Alisha’s behalf as she was unable to attend the meeting.

The second open position is Co-Upper Division Representative. Jacqueline Leamer was nominated for that position earlier in the week. The floor is open for additional nominations for that position. Any candidate for the position should be the parent or guardian of a student in grades 5-8 and should be able to represent the Upper Division of the school. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else, please put it into the chat or raise your virtual hand and you will be elevated. No additional nominations were made.

The third open position is Co-Vice President of Membership. At a previous meeting, Afrosa Amin was elected to the position. Afrosa is now re-running for the position with Luz Muy as a co-candidate. The floor is open for additional nominations for that position. If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else, please put it into the chat or raise your virtual hand and you will be elevated. No additional nominations were made.

The fourth open position is Co-Vice President of Communications. At a previous meeting, Betty Ruan was elected to the position. Betty is now re-running for the position with Ella Drummond as a co-candidate. The floor is open for additional nominations for that position. No additional nominations were made.

Kevin launched a ballot for the Board positions. Alisha Arthur was elected as Co-Lower Division Representative. Jacqueline Leamer was elected as Co-Vice President of the Upper Division. Afrosa Amin and Luz Muy were elected as Co-Vice Presidents of Membership. Betty Ruan and Ella Drummond were elected as Co-Vice Presidents of Communications.

The PTA proceeded with elections for the parent SLT member position. It is a two-year position and the successful candidate will serve through June 2025. At present, there are no nominations for the position. President Mauricio López Campero made a pitch for the SLT position. He explained that the SLT is a body of parents and teachers who work with Principal Sonita, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) member and the PTA President to create a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) for the school. The CEP is intended to meet the needs of the students and the educational program. The SLT meets every month, on a Tuesday, at 5:30 p.m. Meetings are held in-person and run about two hours. The SLT collaborates to set goals which are informed by the Chancellor's priorities. If you wish to participate as a member of the SLT, you will have a voice in many aspects of your child's education in the school. Any parent from the school can run, no matter how new. The responsibilities of the parent SLT member are to attend meetings, provide input, and reach out to the Q300 community to have an understanding of happenings in the school and parental priorities. It is important to ensure that both the Lower and Upper Divisions are represented by parent members. Ellen Chu was nominated from the floor and was elected to the open parent SLT member position.

Kevin congratulated the winners and thanked those candidates who had run for positions but had not been elected. It is good to have contested positions because it shows that many people want to be involved in the PTA. Kevin expressed hope that the candidates who were not elected will find a role as an active member of a committee or on the Board in the future.

C. President's Report

President Mauricio López Campero shared that parents had reached out to the PTA Board to share issues that were affecting their children related to recent national and international events. He expressed support and thanks for the PTA Board and Q300 community. He thanked the candidates who ran for election and urged those who were not elected to not get discouraged and to find other ways to support the school, including by helping with the spring 2024 carnival to celebrate Q300's 10th Anniversary and with grant writing.

Mauricio reported that there is a grant from New York Sun Works that the PTA can apply for to help fund the maintenance of the hydroponics lab in the Upper Division. This year, for the first time, the PTA is covering that expense, which is approximately \$7,000. Mauricio asked that individuals with experience writing grants volunteer to help with this effort.

David Wang, Co-Chair of the Direct Appeal Committee, thanked his Co-Chair, Sue Sekar. The Direct Appeal raises more than 80% of the PTA's income. Grade band-specific kickoff letters and contribution forms were recently backpacked in the Lower and Upper Divisions. The suggested contribution for each Lower Division student is \$1,500. The suggested contribution for each Upper Division student is \$1,000. Please give or fundraise any amount that makes sense to you and your family. If the amount is meaningful to you, it is meaningful for us. Some companies match the charitable donations of their employees. It is worth taking a look at [address for charity navigator] to see if your employer offers matching. The PTA's official name for donation purposes is "Q300 Parent-Teacher Association, Inc." and its EIN is on the PTA website at <https://q300pta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Q300PTADocumentDirectAppealContributionForm2023.pdf>. The PTA has been fortunate over the years that because of the generosity of the community, it has been able to provide meaningful resources and support for Q300 students.

D. Principal's Report

Principal Sonita Ramkishun gave the Principal's Report.

Principal Sonita shared that the Upper Division had been selected for a cafeteria enhancement experience. Representatives from the Department of Education (DOE) will visit the Upper Division cafeteria to update all of the seatings as well as the line of how food is served. Currently, there are traditional rectangular tables and students come in one door and exit from another and are served one tray at a time. Circular tables have been selected and the line will be changed to a self-serve line. Sonita has been told that the enhancements will be made before June 2023. She and the principal of the co-located school, IS 126, will work together to select colors and to display the schools' logos on the wall.

Principal Sonita provided an update on the Teaching Assistant (TA) situation. Two weeks ago, Sonita sent an email to parents and guardians advising that 22nd Century Technologies, the company that Q300 (and other public schools) uses to pay the TAs, was having issues with its payment system. The payment situation is now working. Sonita thanked the parents who had collaborated with her to develop a plan for a hardship fund in the event that payments could not be made to TAs through Twenty Second Technologies' system. Thank you to Co-Secretary David Wang who has helped Sonita obtain more resumes from candidates. Sonita has emailed four of the new candidates and is extending offers to three of them. She is working on trying to hire a full complement of TAs.

i-Ready parent reports for math and reading will be sent home tomorrow. The teachers have already reviewed the reports. If you have questions about the reports, please contact your child's teacher. This academic year, there is not a designated time for teachers to meet with parents and guardians. Instead, teachers have 55 minutes per week when they can engage with parents taking into account the teacher's schedule and the parent's. If you have problems scheduling time, please reach out to Sonita at principal@q300.org.

Parent-teacher conferences will take place on November 2, which is a half-day for all students. Lower Division students will be dismissing at 11:15 a.m. Upper Division students will be dismissing at 11:30 a.m. OPT buses will be running. Please fill out a new dismissal plan if you need to change your original arrangements for November 2. Slots for parent-teacher conferences became available via email on October 24. If you did not get a slot, please email your child's teacher. If you need a translator, please let Jenny Lando know at JennyLando@q300.org so she can make arrangements and support you.

One of the Fifth Grade teachers has gone on maternity leave. She is being replaced by a long-term substitute, Ms. Celeste, who is working with the Fifth Grade students as well as the Sixth Grade social studies class.

Principal Sonita is actively interviewing to hire a Spanish language teacher for the Upper Division. She does not have a timeline for when the position will be filled.

In response to a question about why students in the Upper Division who arrived by bus early were no longer allowed to play in the school yard, Principal Sonita stated that any student who arrives via an Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) bus must enter the school via the main entrance and go straight to the cafeteria. She said that time in the cafeteria was brief, from 8:05 a.m. to 8:25 a.m., so there is not flexibility for students to go in and out. For those students who arrive via public bus, they enter through the back door of the school and are not restricted in terms of going in and out or playing in the school yard. Sonita said that the only change she was aware of is that for afterschool, students are not allowed to stay on the school grounds but must instead leave the playground by 3:00 p.m. because the afterschool programs require that space. Sonita is going to look into reports by parents and students that students who arrived via OPT bus were previously allowed to play in the school yard.

A member asked whether Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grade students, who do not have snack time, could snack while working or take part in a grab-and-go breakfast. Principal Sonita responded that the school is not able to offer snack time because there are not the resources to monitor issues arising from clean-up, allergies, and students using laptops while snacking. There will not be a grab-and-go option as the school makes available to students a hot breakfast every morning from 8:05 to 8:25 a.m. that they can eat in the lunchroom. Grab-and-go has never been a thing for middle schools, which is why the Upper Division students have a longer period of time to sit in the cafeteria. At the Lower Division, there is not as much time to sit in the cafeteria, which is why grab-and-go is offered instead of a hot breakfast.

A member asked whether it was possible for students to take parts of lunch and not other parts. For example, is it possible to get the fries and the vegetable, but not the burger. Principal Sonita responded that if the fries and vegetable come with the burger, the answer is no, but that if the student is vegetarian, something can be worked

out with the servers via Ms. Connie, Mr. Khary, or a paraprofessional (para). It is anticipated that with the new set-up for the Upper Division cafeteria, students will be able to select exactly what they want, which should cut down on food waste. Please tell your child that if they need a special arrangement in the cafeteria, to ask Ms. Connie, Mr. Khary or a para.

Please email Principal Sonita at principal@q300.org if you have additional questions.

E. Resolutions

President Mauricio López Campero advised that there are two resolutions that members need to vote on. The first resolution concerns a kickback from the New York Martial Arts Academy. The second resolution concerns covering a debt. The third resolution concerns District 30's Trunk or Treat event, at which District 30 schools send cars to the Astoria Park parking lot with trunks of candy, decorations, small toys and other items that students can choose from.

Mauricio and David explained that if you make a donation to the Q300 PTA in the amount of \$177 before December 22, 2023, the New York Martial Arts Center will provide a voucher for free introductory lessons. Marco Newbury added that this was an opportunity to give students a significant discount for martial arts lessons that represents approximately 30% off. The entirety of your \$177 donation will go to the Q300 PTA. It is anticipated that more information about the opportunity will be backpacked home.

A motion was made to approve a fundraising initiative in which the New York Martial Arts Academy will offer a voucher that can be redeemed for a limited number of introductory classes by those who want to make a donation of a certain amount to the PTA. The number of vouchers is limited and subject to availability. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

With respect to the second resolution, Co-Treasurer Sophia Peng explained that last year, Principal Sonita had some budget that was going to be used to invite authors to speak to the Upper and Lower Division students. An author came for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, but the PTA did not receive the invoice at the time. The total amount of the invoice is just under \$1,600 and represents the author's speaking fee as well as the purchase of some of the author's signed, hardcover books (which the school has received) for the school. Because the PTA has closed the books for last school year, the invoice will need to be paid out of this year's balance.

A motion was made to amend the 2023-2024 budget to add a line item to pay for this service. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

A member asked what they should do to request a school visit from an author who represents their family's culture. Mauricio advised her to contact Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando at JennyLando@q300.org, with a copy to the PTA President at president@q300pta.org.

A motion was made to approve the allocation of up to \$500 to purchase raffle items, candy and set-up supplies for the Trunk or Treat event. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

F. Treasurer's Report

Sophia Peng delivered the Treasurer's Report. Cash inflows for the month of September are \$845 for the Direct Appeal and \$1,210 from various fundraising events and bank interest. If you incurred expenses in connection with any of those events, please submit your receipts for reimbursement to treasurer@q300.org. For the year to date, the PTA is net \$2,600 for our fundraising events.

From an academic support perspective in the Lower Division, in September the PTA transferred \$68,541 to fund the TA positions and \$55,930 for enrichments and electives. The PTA transferred \$424 for teacher wish lists. In the Upper Division, the PTA transferred \$48,939 for enrichments and electives, \$550 for teacher wish lists and \$7,886 on the hydroponics lab maintenance.

Total inflows/outflows for September were \$180,262 in outflow.

G. School Leadership Team (SLT) Report

SLT member Mauricio López Campero reported that an SLT meeting was held on October 24. Further details about the SLT meeting are in the SLT minutes, which are available on Q300's website as well as the PTA's website. At its last meeting, the SLT discussed three of the Chancellor's five priorities. The first priority discussed was that all students should have a high-quality academic experience. The SLT discussed opening up opportunities for students to engage more actively in the school through, in the Upper Division, expanded roles where students can engage and assist with the school community. Civics for All is being taught in the Lower Division so students can learn to speak and engage more. The SLT has asked teachers to hold monthly team-building activities to help students engage more closely with teachers. The second priority discussed was that all students graduate college career-ready and have a strong plan for economic security. The SLT is ensuring that math is incorporated into every unit and that inquiry and experiential-based learning is incorporated into English Language Arts (ELA). In addition, enrichment trips are being planned to help support this. There is also a project to increase exposure to diverse career pathways. The third priority discussed was redesigning the system to be more inclusive and responsive for parents and families. The SLT discussed increasing opportunities for parents to engage through workshops and in-person events at the school. In addition, the need to ensure language support for events happening at the school was discussed. If you require language support at such an event, please contact Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando at JennyLando@q300.org. Finally, there is a family interest survey that will be launched to survey parents about their interests.

H. Committee Reports

1. Membership Vice-President Afrosa Amin reported on the Fall Costume Party, which will be taking place at the Upper Division from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on October 29.
2. Fundraising Co-Vice-President Lisa Christopher reported that the Direct Appeal forms have been backpacked. They contain information about donating to the PTA via the Direct Appeal. Information about the Thanksgiving Pie fundraiser has been backpacked in the Lower Division and will be backpacked soon in the Upper Division. Information about the fundraiser has also been conveyed in emails from Principal Sonita and Jenny Lando. The pies come from Betty Bakery (owed by a Q300 parent) and La Guli, and are delicious. A Friendsgiving gathering will be held at Uno Pizzeria & Grill (in Long Island City, across from the Museum of the Moving Image) where teachers, staff and families can meet PTA Board and SLT members. It will take place on November 10 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Paper forms have been backpacked in the Lower Division. A Carnival Committee is being formed to research vendor options for the Q300 10th Anniversary Carnival, which will be held in the spring. If you are interested in being part of the Carnival Committee or the Auction Committee, please do so. Emails will be sent about these committees soon. The Carnival Committee is in the process of researching vendors for the Carnival. The Auction Committee will solicit summer camp auction items. Congratulations to those who ran for PTA office. If you were not elected, please join the Fundraising Committee and help us with these initiatives.
3. Communications Co-Vice-President Betty Ruan put out a call for parent and guardian volunteers to join the Translation Committee and the Newsletter Committee. If you have a background in journalism, writing articles, or sharing photos, please get involved. Past newsletters are available to peruse at the PTA website at <https://q300pta.org/pta/newsletters/>. Please reach out to communications@q300pta.org. The PTA appreciates the families who volunteer their efforts to provide translations. In response to a member question about why the PTA did not budget for translation, Mauricio explained that for all DOE activities, language support must be provided. For PTA activities, however, the situation is different.
4. Executive Vice-President Yvette Choy and Community Affairs Vice-President Salua Baida reported on District 30's Trunk or Treat. Trunk or Treat will take place on October 27 from 4:30-8:00 p.m. at the Astoria Park parking lot. District 30 schools will send cars with trunks of candy, decorations, small toys and other items that students can choose from. There will be non-candy items available at Truck or Treat via the Teal Pumpkin Project. Q300 is partnering with PS 17 for Trunk or Treat. Please join us and bring a bag of candy if you are so inclined. Salua reported on participatory budgeting, which enables communities to vote for

money to be allocated to their priorities. In the September-January stage, school and community groups collect ideas as to where money can be spent within their school or community. Budget delegates then transform these ideas into formal proposals. Neighborhood committees will review the proposals and will decide what items make the ballot that the public will vote on. In March or April, there is a get out the vote week. Once the proposals have been determined, there is a nine-day community vote. Only those 11 or older who live, work or attend school in the district will be able to vote for this. Given that Q300 is a citywide school, that puts it in a more difficult position. This year, Q300 is partnering with its co-located schools, PS 17 and IS 126, to present a united front. On the Lower Division/PS 17 side, the PTA is requesting auditorium renovation including new seats and other updates (there is already funding for air conditioning), classroom air conditioners for those that are not functioning, shared library materials and furnishings and the renovation of two courtyards to update equipment and add safe floor padding. On the Upper Division/IS 126 side, the PTA is requesting a refurbished, air-conditioned auditorium, classroom air conditioners for those that are not functioning and patio enhancement (more greenery and updated basketball hoops). Finally, on November 1, which is Dia de los Muertos, Salua will be working with Ms. Yvette to set up a small ofrenda, hold a sing-a-long with the students, and do holiday-related arts and crafts. In addition, an artist is making free coloring books for the Lower Division students that will compliment a book Salua will be reading to the students.

5. Lower Division Representative Erica Soto Eng reported that the Fall Costume Party is sold out. There is a waitlist so please add yourself to the waitlist by emailing costumeparty@q300pta.org. The waitlist has been moving. If you are coming, you have already received a confirmation email with details and a volunteer link. If you are attending, please volunteer for a 30-minute slot. The PTA cannot run these events without volunteers.

I. New Business

Erica Soto Eng reported on the holiday collection, which is not a PTA initiative. Alyssa Duvall previously sent out an email to the Google group about donating to a holiday collection which benefits all Q300 staff. Alyssa will chair the Holiday Collection Committee but needs three or four more people to assist her. It is a short-term project but incredibly rewarding, so please consider that.

Yvette Choy reminded members that tomorrow is Lower Division Picture Day.

J. Approval of the Minutes

A motion was made to approve the September 28, 2023 general membership minutes. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

K. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 pm ET. The next general membership meeting will be held on November 16, 2023 at 6:30 pm ET on a virtual platform.

Kate Swearengen & David William Wang, Co-Secretaries