



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES • November 16, 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 58. Quorum was reached.

B. Call to Order

President Mauricio López Campero called the virtual meeting to order at approximately 6:35 pm ET.

C. Principal’s Report

Principal Sonita Ramkishun gave the Principal’s Report. The following are highlights:

1. Social Worker Rachel Weiss gave an update on this year’s Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programming. The school has created an Upper Division and Lower Division SEL calendar that focuses on team building, buddying up between grades, and diversity topics. In addition, every month the school is focusing on one habit of mind. Ms. Rachel invited parents/guardians to be guest speakers as part of this programming. They can speak about habits of mind or cultural themes. For example, a parent recently spoke on Día de los Muertos. The topic for November is sports. A parent will be speaking to the Upper Division about an organization that works with Armenian refugees and teaches girls how to play soccer. Two parents will be speaking to the Lower Division about their lives in sports. So far, parents from multi-generational restaurateurs have spoken on the topic of food. If you are interested in being a speaker, or if you have questions or ideas, please contact Ms. Rachel at rachel@q300pta.org. You can choose whether you would like to speak to Lower or Upper Division students, or to a smaller group within the Lower or Upper Division. Finally, parents are invited to attend Ms. Rachel’s virtual parent workshops.
2. Ms. Sonita reported that there are currently two teaching assistants (TAs) in kindergarten, two in first grade, one in second grade and one in third grade. In addition, two TAs are being onboarded.
3. Lower Division students will have an additional recess once a week for 15-20 minutes.
4. Kindergarteners and first graders will have one period a week of explorations, where they will have the opportunity to play with blocks, gears, and other STEM building activities. In previous years, these grades have had explorations twice a week; however, this year it is limited to one, as the other period has been allocated to instructional time for the new reading curriculum.
5. Writing celebrations have begun at the Lower Division. This year, the school will be doing something new and will be inviting parents to come to the classrooms for science presentations. Please stay tuned to emails from teachers on these opportunities to visit the classroom.
6. The spelling bee will take place on November 20. Classroom winners from grades 4-8 will compete in a school spelling bee. The school winner will go on to compete at the district level.
7. Global Kids is supporting lunch clubs at the Upper Division. Students can sign up for these clubs during lunch. Parents can also sign up through a link that was sent to them last week.

8. On November 21, eighth graders will take their cap and gown photos and Upper Division students can retake their school photos.
9. Thank you to PTA President Mauricio López Campero, Executive Vice President Yvette Choy, the PTA Board, and the class parents for their support. Thank you to Q300 families who are an integral part of the school, and to Q300 staff who always go above and beyond. Thank you to our Q300 students for making the school so great. Finally, thank you to Assistant Principal Anna Milonakis and Parent Coordinator Jenny Lando for helping to make sure everyone is supported.
10. Happy Thanksgiving to those celebrating. May this time be filled with gratitude, friends, and family.
11. In response to a parent who expressed concern that the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) Orange Bus may be overcrowded. Ms. Sonita responded that she had escalated the concern to OPT. She noted that Q300 does not supervise OPT or bus drivers or is able to make changes to bus stops or routes. Instead, Q300 escalates concerns to OPT and follows up with OPT to ensure that such concerns are addressed.
12. A parent asked if the school could host a regular gathering or “after party” for parents/guardians after a writing celebration, to allow those who had taken the day off from work to interact with staff and connect with other parents. Ms. Sonita responded that the school tried that last year, but that there were staffing issues about supervising such gatherings during school hours.
13. The administration continues to communicate to the superintendent about the importance of housing Q300 in a single school building.
14. A parent expressed thanks to the teachers who have been receptive to streamlining communications to parents. Ms. Sonita said that the school had shifted from the Google site to allowing teachers to communicate with parents via their preferred mode of communication. As a result, there will be a mix of teacher newsletters and emails. If you miss something from your child’s class, please email your child’s teacher directly. If you are not getting communications from your child’s teacher, please let the administration know as well so it can ensure that its information is current.
15. A parent asked if the Diversity Committee will be convened this year. Ms. Sonita responded that it was still happening, but likely on a smaller scale than last year. Ms. Sonita explained that she and Ms. Anna have more demands on their time this year, due in part to the implementation of the new reading curriculum. The staff is also smaller this year and is taking on a lot more. Ms. Sonita explained that the school has designed an entire school year calendar with the diversity resources and initiatives discussed at past Diversity Committee meetings, so that diversity is embedded and intertwined in everything the school does. Ms. Sonita is waiting for updates from the Department of Education (DOE) concerning the 2024-2025 enrollment process.
16. A parent thanked Ms. Anna for her efforts handling 504 accommodations for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT).
17. A parent asked if Ms. Sonita could speak to Q300’s recent placement in the U.S. News & World Report rankings. Ms. Sonita responded that the administration relies on data from New York State, which measures the school’s performance levels in various categories. In 2020-2022, Q300 was considered a “Recognition School.” Last year, that terminology was changed to “Local Support and Improvement School.” For 2022-2023, 95.2% of Q300 students were proficient in English Language Arts (ELA) and 96.8% of Q300 students were proficient in math.
18. In response to a parent question about budget cuts, Ms. Sonita noted that Q300’s enrollment has remained essentially steady. She will likely be unable to hire additional staff this year. She noted however, that parents may need to purchase school supplies for next year, rather than to have the school cover them.
19. In response to a parent question about how enrichment service providers are evaluated, Ms. Sonita stated that she gathers feedback from teachers. In addition, in the Upper Division, she conducts a student and teacher survey at the end of the fall semester to help determine whether such providers should be continued in the Spring. The PTA’s Enrichment Committee conducts its own enrichment survey with parents, teachers, and Upper Division students.

20. Principal Sonita continues to actively interview to hire an Upper Division Spanish language teacher who is passionate about teaching and knowledgeable about the language for the Upper Division.
21. In response to a parent question about dates for the student electives showcases, Ms. Sonita said that the Lower Division showcase would take place on January 26, and that she would provide information about the Upper Division showcase in her weekly email.

D. President's Report

President Mauricio López Campero announced that Vice President of Community Affairs Salua Baida is seeking volunteers to work on the NYC City Council participatory budgeting process, in which the community helps allocate \$1 million of the local City Councilmember's discretionary budget. Interested volunteers will be nominated to serve as a Delegate on the Citizen's Assembly (you must be 16 or older and live, work or study in New York City Council District 22, or be a parent of a student in District 22). Delegates will attend three two-hour meetings where they will transform ideas into full proposals, with support from city agencies and staff. Delegates will narrow down proposals and select projects that meet the needs of the community. In April, those who are 11 and over and live, work or study in District 22, or are a parent of a student in District 22 will vote on the projects. Thank you to Kate and Nomi from Councilmember Tiffany Cabán's office for helping to create a Q300-specific participatory budgeting info sheet for the Q300 community. If you have any questions about this process or would like a copy of the document, please email saluab@q300pta.org. For the Upper Division campus, Q300 and its co-located school I.S. 126 have submitted the following proposals: (1) auditorium refurbishing, including installing new seating, and air conditioning; (2) classroom air conditioners; and (3) enhancing outdoor space including by updating equipment and adding greenery. For the Lower Division campus, Q300 Lower and its co-located school PS 17 have proposed the following: (1) auditorium renovation; (2) classroom air conditioners; (3) shared library materials and furnishings; and (4) renovation of the two courtyards (the cement entrance and the inner courtyard area). Thank you to Janet Perez Garcia, Christine Serdjenian Yearwood and Councilmember Tiffany Cabán's office for all of their support.

President Mauricio López Campero announced that the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) will be holding protests on a borough-by-borough basis to protest budget cuts. The dates will be shared once announced.

The Coat Drive has started. At the Presidents' Council meeting, which is a meeting between PTA Presidents of the various schools in District 30, it was reported that newly arrived immigrant students are in need of coats and other winter gear. Please support the Coat Drive to assist these newly arrived students and their families.

Thank you to Maria Hantzopoulos and others who have organized the Thanksgiving Pie fundraiser. Those who ordered pies should have received an email with pick-up details. Please refrigerate your pie immediately. Thank you to families who have helped Erica Soto Eng with efforts to move the Thanksgiving lunch for teachers (which lunch was generously donated by Q300 parent Rami) from Manhattan to the Upper and Lower Division.

E. Resolutions

Co-Treasurer Amy Wong introduced a resolution to reallocate \$1,900 from the TA budget line to the following: (1) \$300 to the Upper Division Shakespeare Festival elective; (2) \$500 for the Upper Division Math Team; (3) \$200 for a reimbursement request for a Sixth-Grade get-together from last school year; and (4) \$900 for the Lower Division chess program. The reason for reallocation from the TA budget line is that we anticipate that funds from that line will not be used as several TAs, whose salaries have been included in the budget, have not yet been hired. A motion was made to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded. The Members then present approved the resolution.

F. Treasurer's Report

Amy Wong delivered the Treasurer's Report. Cash inflows for the month of October are \$18,861 for the Direct Appeal and \$7,900 from various fundraising events (Summer Readathon, Fall Costume Party, and Thanksgiving Pies) and bank interest.

In the Lower Division, the PTA has transferred \$83,000 to fund the TA positions, \$96,000 for enrichments and electives, and \$1,100 for teacher wish lists for September. In the Upper Division, the PTA has transferred \$60,000 for enrichments and electives, \$550 for teacher wish lists and close to \$8,000 for the hydroponics lab maintenance.

If you would like a list of enrichments and their breakdown by Upper and Lower Division, please email treasurer@q300pta.org.

Net October inflow was \$26,780. Net October outflow was \$56,700, mostly for the Upper and Lower Division enrichments.

G. School Leadership Team (SLT) Report

PTA President Mauricio López Campero noted that there was no report, as the SLT has not yet met since the last SLT meeting. The next SLT meeting will be held on November 29.

H. Committee Reports

1. Lower Division Representative Erica Soto Eng reported that on November 17, 2023, the PTA would host the annual Thanksgiving Luncheon for Q300 teachers and staff. Thank you to Q300 parent Rami who has two children currently in the school and one child who has graduated for his many years of donating delicious food for the luncheon. If you would like to volunteer with setting up the room and carrying the food upstairs, please email Erica at erica@q300pta.org. The PTA is looking forward to sharing its gratitude for Q300 teachers and staff.
2. Fundraising Co-Vice-President Christina Lee thanked Maria Hantzopoulos and the Pie Committee for organizing the Thanksgiving Pies fundraiser. Last week, many Q300 families and teachers attended the community-building Friendsgiving at Uno Pizzeria. The PTA provided the teachers and administrators with vouchers to use toward the purchase of their meal. The Book Fair will take place in early December at both campuses. Students and parents will have the opportunity to purchase books. A Gift Card flash sale will launch early next week; the deadline to pay for the Gift Cards is November 28. Parents are encouraged to use the electronic form (<https://q300pta.org/fundraising-announcements/>) to purchase Gift Cards. Payments can be sent in via your child's backpack. The Fundraising Committee needs help soliciting donations from summer camps to auction at the upcoming Camp Auction. If you are interested in helping, please email fundraising@q300pta.org. The Fundraising Committee holds virtual meetings on the third Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. or so. Everyone is welcome to participate. If you are interested in joining, please email fundraising@q300pta.org. Finally, the 10th Anniversary Carnival will happen in May. The Fundraising Committee needs volunteers to help with research and logistics. Please be mindful that all of the PTA's fundraisers rely on the work of volunteers, and that we need you.
3. Direct Appeal Co-Chair David Wang spoke about the Direct Appeal, which raises more than 80% of the PTA's budget. Thank you to Sue Sekar who is the Direct Appeal Co-Chair and to the parents who have made donations or pledges to the Direct Appeal. Most of the PTA Board has already donated or pledged to the Direct Appeal. To date, we have raised 36% of our \$230,000 goal. That does not include corporate matches or pledges. We are on a good trajectory but there is a long way to go. For those who have not given, please consider doing so. 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 to us. In addition, if you work for an employer who participates in corporate matching, please take advantage of this option. If Q300 is not added as a corporate matching option, please ask your company if it can be added.
4. David Wang also noted that if a child attended Q300 or any other public school during the 2020-2021 school year, they are likely eligible for pandemic relief funds. Parents/guardians should have received an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card. Funds may have been added to the card since then, so it is worth checking the card. The funds are for missed school lunches during the pandemic period and must be used to purchase groceries. You cannot give away the card. However, you can donate groceries purchased with the card or their cash equivalent to a local food pantry.

5. Communications Co-Vice President Betty Ruan put out a call for parent/guardian volunteers with marketing or customer database marketing experience. The Communications Committee would like to chat with you about platforms the PTA could use to communicate more effectively. Please reach out to communications@q300pta.org or secretary@q300pta.org if you are able to help with this. The Communications Committee also invites parents and guardians who love to write or are in the editorial field to join the Newsletter Committee. Q300 has published newsletters in the past and the PTA is looking to pick that up again this year. Finally, if you find that you are not receiving communications from the PTA, either through emails or bulletins, and you would like to receive those communications from us, please reach out.
6. Membership Vice-President Afrosa Amin reported that the Fall Costume Party was a blast. Thank you to those who helped make it a success. If you have filled out the volunteer survey in the past, please complete it again to ensure we have information about your areas of specialty and interest on file. You can also send that information via email to members@q300pta.org. The Membership Committee is in the early stages of planning for Winterfest and the International Potluck. If you would like to help plan for this large event, please email winterfest@q300pta.org.
7. Community Affairs Vice-President Salua Baida thanked Erica Soto Eng, Janet Perez-Garcia, and the PTAs of Q300, PS17 and IS126 for their work in the tri-school Coat Drive. The Coat Drive started on November 15 and ends on November 22. Please bring in adult sized coats to donate by November 20. There is a large community of newcomers we would like to welcome and assist, in addition to families who live in public housing and those who may have been impacted by recent events like the SAG-AFTRA strike. Thank you to those who have donated and to Carla Lin, David Mack and Alisha Arthur for helping with printing. Thank you to Ella Drummond and Afrosa Amin for helping with the coat distribution. If you would like to help with printing in the future, please email communityaffairs@q300.org. Finally, thank you to the PS17 PTA, in particular Jenny Cardenillas, Riham Mohammed and Janet Perez-Garcia, for generously sharing its ground floor closet space with the Q300 PTA.

I. Approval of the Minutes

A motion was made to approve the October 26, 2023 general membership minutes. The motion was seconded. The members then present approved the motion.

J. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm ET. The next general membership meeting will be held on December 21, 2023 at 6:30 pm ET on a virtual platform.

Kate Swearengen & David William Wang, Co-Secretaries