

**School Leadership Team Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Virtual Platform - Zoom
Thursday, February 4, 2021
5:00 pm – 6.00 pm**

Members in Attendance: Sonita Ramkishun (Principal), Ali Lisberger (SLT Timekeeper + UFT), Chidi Amasiani (Teacher), Kiera Sullivan (SLT Chairperson + Teacher), Jean Kim (Teacher), Maria Hantzopoulos (PTA Co-President), Sara Clough (Parent), Sue Sekar (SLT Secretary + Parent), Ian Koh (Parent), Fiona Yung (Parent)

Observers: Anna Milonakis (Assistant Principal)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5.10pm.

The SLT Chairperson, Kiera Sullivan, reminded listeners that all opinions expressed during the meeting belonged to the individuals making the comments.

2. Opening remarks by Sonita Ramkishun

Anna Milonakis read a quote about special education and children who learn differently - about being kind and accepting of all people. We salute all of our children and families who are different and Q300 will always be a place where we welcome students and families with any and all differences embraced.

Sonita recapped some recent announcements regarding the future of G&T testing and admissions:

- On January 27th, the Panel for Educational Policy voted not to renew the contract with Pearson (who previously did the G&T testing for rising K-3rd grade students).
- On January 28th, the Mayor announced families will have the opportunity to apply for G&T programs for the upcoming school year, but has not said how this will happen.

Sonita noted that the school has rallied through many changes – changes in leadership, changes to how instruction is given with remote/blended learning and changes across our broader community due to COVID-19. Sonita is very thankful to

the SLT and is looking forward to us working together to build trust, alleviate anxieties and advocate for our children and our community. Sonita will continue to lead with her heart, and with poise and patience.

Sonita has connected with the Principals from Anderson, TAG, Lower Lab, BSI and Nest+m. All the Principals are ready to work together to help the DOE. The DOE has not reached out with a plan yet. The Principals are currently focusing their discussions on equity, what is giftedness and how the policy changes might impact their schools.

Sonita has also connected with Daniel from the Office of Enrollment but there is no updated information available at this time. As noted in prior meetings, the Q300 Diversity proposal is still set to be implemented to the extent possible, but not sure how.

Maria noted that parents have been asking about general admissions for Kindergarten (which has now closed) and how these G&T changes could impact that. Sonita will continue following up with the Office of Enrollment but noted that usually G&T placements occur well after general education placements so that part will stay the same.

There is no additional information yet as to whether the new processes will be developed from the top down, or how much the community will be able to influence the outcome.

3. Community remarks

The Chairperson (Kiera) gave permission for Jenny Lando (Q300 Parent Coordinator) to address the SLT.

Jenny held four 'Tea with the PC' meetings recently to allow parents to share their questions and feelings. Approximately 35 parents attended over the four meetings, representing grades K through 8th.

Feelings from the parents:

- Feeling hopeless from the lack of news/information
- Rumors based on media posts have added to anxiety
- Our childrens' education should not be tied to political games
- Hearing nothing leads to more uncertainty
- Hoping that the new admissions processes will address racial equity issues
- The timing of the decision has thrown a wrench in many parents' plans, especially those hoping for sibling priority
- Feeling optimistic about the idea of expanding G&T seats to more students in NYC

Questions from the parents:

- Can we request a roadmap of the plan?
- Should we form an advocacy group at the school or PTA level?
- How can we support our families through these changes?
- What role does the SLT play?
- Is Sonita meeting with other G&T Principals?
- Will there still be sibling priority?
- Are current staff roles in jeopardy if there are no new students enrolled in future years?
- Will our School Administration fight for our students?
- We have heard the upcoming Kindergarten class will be able to complete their G&T schooling through 5th grade – what about grades 6th through 8th?
- Will there be a way for siblings to apply to zoned schools near Q300?
- The PTA Board has met with other PTAs – how else can our community meet with other groups?

4. Community share out by PTA Co-President, Maria Hantzopoulos

Maria noted that she had also received many questions and concerns from the Q300 parent community. There is a range of perspectives – some wanting to preserve the single G&T admissions test, and some looking for a change. Members of the PTA Board have met with other Citywide G&T school PTA's. Not all schools are on the same page, nor are their parent bodies, again there is a range of viewpoints and positions. We will need to continue these conversations as a community and the PTA hopes to host some.

In addition, Maria, together with PTA Co-President Lynn Kennedy, connected with the PTA Presidents of BSI. They have also reached out to Dr. Composto to try and get more information.

There are concerns from parents about whether the school will be phased out – and if not, what the admissions process will be, particularly as the General K admissions process closed last week. Regarding concerns over the absence of a singular admissions test for K (not Middle School), we should reflect that many children who have entered through the singular test in the lower division have left our school over the years because their needs were not being met. We should also reflect on the fact that elementary students admitted after 3rd grade (and since the school's inception, the majority of our Middle School students up until this year) haven't come through the single test process and have thrived in our community.

5. Envision, Imagine, Realize Protocol

The SLT member shared their thoughts on the below envision, imagine, realize protocol (each from different members);

a. Envision- What do you envision the new G & T admissions policy to be?

- There could be an alternative way of administering the test that is imposed on us (concerns that it's not something we agree with)
- There could be additional criteria for admissions, potentially including teachers' observations and recommendations
- There could be more diverse evaluation measurements taken into account for admissions, like non-verbal and group evaluations
- The new admissions program might be one that doesn't screen rigidly in kindergarten and honors that all children from different situations and with different backgrounds and needs have gifts and talents
- It could be a more inclusive admissions policy that allows for more engagement with different communities
- There could be several different methods of evaluations – some students may be admitted to G&T schools via tests, some via recommendations, some via interview etc

b. Imagine- If you could come up with possibilities what would you imagine the new admissions process to look like?

- More reach-out to different neighborhoods and communities to increase access
- More measures of criteria for entry rather than singular test
- Teachers could be included in the selection criteria and could use a test plus other criteria
- Using a portfolio of criteria and observations – teachers, parents etc.
- A different process for younger children (K) compared to Middle School children for whom testing may be more appropriate
- Gifted education programs could start in 3rd grade rather than in Kindergarten
- Since screening in kindergarten is controversial, a combination or an open and weighted lottery (supporting both siblings and integration and potentially other criteria).
- If they do keep some form of test, have it done across all students in pre-K and then Kindergarten (to increase access in the community)
- More schools offering gifted programs so it's not so exclusive and so all students who need that environment can have access
- Strengthening of resources and enrichments across all schools, so that all schools can offer accelerated or tailored educational programming.

c. Realize- What setbacks or limitations do you think your process could have?

- Implementation of a new process and administering it equitably could be challenging
- It may not be inclusive of siblings if they are not prioritized
- Challenges in determining the criteria
- Challenges in measuring giftedness, and how do we prevent bias and judgment when it is not an objective test
- It will be a lot of work to develop and implement a new admissions process
- It will be hard to get some folks on board with any changes to the process
- There is limited funding and resources at the DOE to administer something more holistic

6. Next steps

The next scheduled SLT meeting is on February 24 2021. Sonita has invited Daniel from the Office of Enrolment to come and share any additional information and allow us to ask questions. Note that his availability to attend is to be confirmed.

A question was asked on how can we collaborate as a community in getting ready for next steps? Sonita said it is challenging to navigate things right now as we don't know whether it will be a top-down approach or if we will be invited to participate. For now, parents can direct concerns, questions and ideas to the School Administration so they can collate everyone's thoughts. We are waiting for guidance on how this upcoming year will look and also future years, and how much we can influence. For now we will continue to build trust in our community and reassure parents that we will work through this together.

7. Adjournment

Sonita thanked the SLT for their engagement and honesty during the meeting and noted that information will continue to be shared with the entire parent body as it becomes available.

The meeting was adjourned at 6.09pm.