



International School of Brooklyn

NEWSLETTER

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Teach Local, Reach Global

by Teresa Santamaria

We are so very proud of this delightful moment — where we’ve signed the lease on our new location — a location that will express the maturation of our school to a complete elementary and preschool school. Our “Teach Local, Reach Global: The International School of Brooklyn Expansion Campaign” is in full public swing as of this writing and we’re working on attaining the remaining capital to fully outfit our site and prepare it for our kids. We can exhale for a moment and smile!

What has been done so far? And what is coming down the pike?

So far ...

This past June, ISB’s Site Committee (after having looked at over 10 locations) set its sights on acquiring a former Catholic school building in Carroll Gardens to house ISB beginning in September 2010. Despite the fact that it was the beginning of summer vacation, the Capital Campaign Management Committee moved quickly into high gear and began rolling out the silent and, subsequently, the public phases of the campaign, with a goal of raising \$500,000 by December 2010.

The 30,000 sq ft building will allow ISB to immediately double enrollment capacity for the 2010-2011 school year. Over the next three years, ISB will continue to grow with its students, one grade per year, and launch a middle school program in 2012 from this site. The building boasts large sunlit classrooms, as well as space for art and music classrooms, a cafeteria, an onsite playground and additional administrative space.

By the beginning of October (and before the launch of the public phase of the campaign), the Committee had already raised \$130,000 in

“seed funds” from several close friends and families. Throughout the course of the fall, the campaign excitement was announced to the ISB community through cocktail parties hosted by ISB parents at their homes, and through meetings with individuals.

Of our announcement party to ISB parents, Liane Tuschl, one host, commented, “Most importantly [the event]

introduced and brought parents together in a personal and relaxed way. I saw how parents are as interested as I am in merging

abilities to help to continue creating the school. But people really connected on a personal level too, which leaves as great, or greater, an impact ... the campaign is a very rational thing for me rather than an emotional one. It’s the necessary and also right thing to do, the next step forward. The new school seems like great base – what I like most about it is its compactness!”

Now, what’s coming up!

Our full press kit is now complete and we’ve launched our website dedicated to the campaign. This coming January, the co-chairs of the Site Committee will host an on-site fundraiser and tour of the new building for families. The Committee will also begin to reach out to local business owners and other neighbors to let them know how excited the ISB community is to be in the Carroll Gardens area. The Capital Campaign Management Committee will also continue to meet with donors and grantmakers to raise the funds needed and gladly follow any additional leads you may have.

I am so proud and humbled to be a member of the ISB community. From the small footprints of our early Playgroups in 2004 to a full school building in 2010, the trajectory of ISB is such a phenomenal path. We hope to share our growth and singular direction as well — broadening our community outreach in the years to come. We have so much to be thankful for — great kids and parents, an interested international and local community and a clear purpose that all can support and drive.

To learn more about the “Teach Local, Reach Global” campaign and to contribute, visit www.isbrooklyn.org/expansion or e-mail campaign@isbrooklyn.org.



Thanks to ISB Parents and Morgan Stanley employees Wendy Walasek, Bruce Zenel and Kevin Zalanskas for their support of ISB. Through their efforts, ISB was awarded a \$4,000 grant to support the ISB Scholarship Fund.

A Teaching Moment: ISB's Rebecca Skinner Brings Home a Blackboard Award

by Chris Taylor

As Oscar contenders always say, it's an honor just to be nominated. But ISB's own Rebecca Skinner was not only nominated for a prestigious Blackboard Award honoring New York City's outstanding educators: She won it, one of only three school principals singled out citywide.

“This award showed how much the community cares about the work I'm doing.”

call from organizers. “I wasn't even aware of it,” says Skinner, who was the only principal of an independent school to bring home a prize. “It was a very exciting moment, and it meant a lot to me.”

Factoring into the win was the volume of support her nomination received, drawing from ISB's active parent community. When Skinner was interviewed by Blackboard Awards representatives, in fact, she was told that the sheer number of people involved in the nomination was what helped put her over the top.

At the October awards ceremony in Fordham's Law School, attended by over 200, 25 awards were given out in total by Manhattan Media (publisher of such magazines as New York Family, Avenue, and New York Press). In securing the Blackboard honor, Skinner joins past winners like P.S. 117's Harvey Katz, P.S. 132's Beth Lubeck-Ceffalia, and P.S. 75's Bob O'Brien (read more about the initiative at <http://blackboardawards.com>).

Of this year's crop of winners, two other Brooklyn schools also got a

Honored at a ceremony held by publisher Manhattan Media on Oct. 19, Skinner was somewhat stunned to get an advance

nod: Poly Prep and St. Francis Xavier. By meeting and exchanging ideas with other education innovators from around the city, Skinner was able to draw plenty of inspiration from the gala evening. “One of the things that was so striking was to see the range of schools there — large, small, private, public, religious, special needs. That's what's so unique about New York City, to have so many different schools all doing such great work.”

As she ramps up for continued school growth, and next year's move to a new and bigger location, Skinner is using the Blackboard honor to fuel ISB to even greater heights. “This award showed how much the community cares about the work I'm doing,” she says. “This would have never happened without that community, and that's the part of ISB that's dearest to my heart.”



Why ISB? Shared Stories from ISB Parents

by Catherine Colton

Diversity runs deep at ISB — students and their families represent over 28 countries in 6 continents, and hail from over 13 neighborhoods in Brooklyn, from DUMBO to Sunset Park. Each family has an intriguing story on what drew them to ISB. What many have in common is an interest in an international education, multilingual and multicultural environment, and a close-knit community supporting their child(ren)'s school.

I had the pleasure of speaking with some parents — new and seasoned to the school — about how and why they chose ISB. These are summaries of what they shared:

“The fact that ISB is an international school was very appealing. I attended an international school in Buenos Aires and Asunción, and also spent a year in high school in Brittany with Indiana University. I wanted to provide for my son that same experience — a school where he would be exposed to a global perspective early on.”

—Norma Da Rosa, parent of Simran Singh, Spanish Nursery

“I had plans for my daughter to be in a school in Manhattan before I discovered she would be eligible for 3rd Grade at ISB. I had heard about ISB through a co-worker with a child at the school. I loved ISB so much that I changed my plans. I like the international curriculum, diversity and small size of the school. It has the feel of a community school, not a big institution. For me, a small size for an elementary school is important.”

—Ghyslaine De Souza, parent of Thea Diop, French 3rd Grade

“Our son Hugues was quite young when we moved to Park Slope from Canada. When the time came to consider schools for him, bilingual education was a must. We considered options in Manhattan and Westchester and heard about an option in Brooklyn. ISB was just a year old at the time but we had a good feeling about the people behind the project. I work for the UN and a school curriculum recognized worldwide was important to us.”

—Marc Porret, parent of Eloise & Hugues Porret, French Nursery and 2nd Grade

“When we moved to New York from San Francisco we visited a number of schools to consider for our daughters. We liked the vibe at ISB, which reminded us of the co-op school our children attended. ISB also provided a great opportunity to re-introduce Spanish to our family — my husband moved from Argentina as a child, and I am 3rd generation Mexican-American, so we didn't grow up speaking it. Olivia and Isabella have benefitted from early exposure to Spanish that they now are our translators on trips to visit family abroad.”

—Honey Udarbe, parent of Olivia and Isabella Barrera, Spanish 1st and 3rd Grade

THANKS!
2009-2010 Annual Event Sponsors
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Parent Power: An Interview with ISB PA Co-Chairs by Catherine Colton



As ISB enters a milestone fifth year with 106 students and 84 families, Laura Kraber and Benjamin Talton — mother of Xara and Django Stewart (Spanish 2nd and Pre-K), and father of Kimathi and Nandi (French 1st and Pre-K), respectively — are leading the parent community as co-chairs of the Parents Association.

Picking up where last year's PA chairs left off, Laura and Ben orchestrated a successful Fall Festival that raised \$1,400 for the school. They also introduced a new PA initiative — a welcoming committee of parent volunteers to facilitate traffic through the main entrance during the morning drop-off rush.

"With the school continually growing, we wanted to introduce an element of personalized warmth as you walk through the doors," said Ben. "This is a pivotal, transition year for ISB. We are galvanizing energy to get parents involved so they are part of the transition, while also creating new traditions and structure, with an eye towards growth of the school."

"The response we received from the parents on the new initiative, and for the Fall Festival, was overwhelming," added Laura. "We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents for their enthusiasm, resources and continued help."

In addition to organizing upcoming PA meetings and community events — Children's Book Fair (December 5, 2009) and Spring Fling (June 6, 2010) — Laura and Ben are planning other new initiatives including a Grandparents and Senior Friends Day, as well as events celebrating the new building in Carroll Gardens.

"The PA chairs have played a double roll of ombudsmen and event organizers," said Ben. "Laura and I would like to add another facet, as community builders expanding the circle of friends of ISB through lasting dialogue with people beyond the parent body, such as grandparents and senior friends, and business owners around the school."

Stay tuned for more details on these initiatives and feel free to approach Ben and Laura with your thoughts and ideas!

Dollars for Darfur by Chris Taylor

On her first visit to Sudan's Darfur region, Patricia Parker witnessed a nine-year-old boy walking seven hours to get water for his family. This past September 25th, 40 ISB kids got just a small taste of what that desperate boy faced every day, by participating in the Walk for Water.

The fundraising event for Parker's relief organization, Kids for Kids (kidsforkids.org.uk) attracted 40 kids and 20 parents, walking together from the school to the dog pond in southern Prospect Park. Participants collected water in two milk jugs and hauled them back to ISB, raising \$1,594 in donations for their efforts — and raising awareness about the ongoing tragedy in the Sudan.

The event was the brainchild of ISB mom Nancy Woodruff, who knew of Parker's lifesaving work - and her powerful way of communicating with children - from her time living in the U.K. Indeed, ISB's kids were affected by Parker's presentation to the school in very profound ways.

Jodie Ousley's son Miles was so overcome that he approached strangers on the street, reminding them how lucky they were to have water. Olivia and Isabella Barrera took the initiative to make and sell jewelry, raising a total of \$92. Alex Beers' son Henry assembled his own Walk for Water along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. while on vacation, and hit up relatives for \$120 in donations.

Wonder where the money went? Kids for Kids helps a total of 200,000 people in Darfur, throughout their network of more than 50 villages. They provide villagers with goats (almost 4,000 last year alone), train local midwives, buy lifesaving equipment for local clinics, and install water pumps so that nine-year-old boy Patricia Parker met won't have to walk seven hours for a glass of water.

Even more amazing, the charity has operated through the worst of the armed conflict that has already taken hundreds of thousands of lives. By learning about Darfur's children who were in need half a world away, ISB's kids have started their own trek of a life of service to others.

"I've heard Rex talk about it endlessly, and it clearly had a big impact on him," says ISB dad Gustav Peebles. "It's just the sort of impact about global citizenship that we had hoped would happen when we joined ISB. It's a great idea for teaching kids about the world, and making things palpable for them."



In the Classroom: A Parent's-Eye View

by Megan Browne

The 2nd and 3rd Grade classes are just now completing a unit on Migration. I had the opportunity to visit both the French and Spanish classes to discuss with the students and teachers their impressions and discoveries during this fascinating unit of study.

My first stop was Madame Genuard's class where I participated in circle time. We started with the reasons why someone might migrate. They ranged from positive desires to study, learn languages, learn about other cultures and be closer to family members who had already emigrated to less pleasant circumstances such as war, natural catastrophes or religious persecution. I listened to Micah talk about his parents who have roots in Kenya and Uganda and who emigrated to Kenya from Canada.

We then moved on to discuss one of the field trips that they took to visit Ellis Island. The children were fascinated with the stories of medical examinations that took all of 6 seconds and the marking of people with chalk if they had certain illnesses. They talked with great interest and thoughtfulness of the difficult conditions: lack of food and clean water, lots of folks ill and not many doctors on board.

My next stop was Señorita Bustamante's class. This particular day I was lucky enough to coincide with a visit from Edna Ortiz, Antonio's mother. Edna was explaining her personal experience of emigrating from Colombia to New York. The kids were riveted to her tale, as Edna is a very animated storyteller! Edna told of her family from Colombia first, and specifically the travels back and forth between Colombia and New York that her grandparents made. She told of her own experience coming to New York in 1999 to study and wanting to see Times Square. Edna showed pictures of her family in Colombia (including her father's farm which just had electricity added

this year!) and tried on a Colombian poncho and shared Colombian-made Jet chocolate with the kids.

The kids were fascinated with all of Edna's stories and ended the session by asking her what was most difficult about her emigration to New York and how long it took her to adapt to the different way of life. Edna's response was that, 10 years later, she is still adapting. She has not gotten used to the bitter cold winters or the large numbers of people. Even though she already had learned English, it was difficult for her to understand other since they spoke very fast. She ended saying that her children

were what helped her the most to continue moving forward and adapting to be more comfortable.

I interviewed Ela Zawadzki about the unit. She liked most the opportunity to learn more about her parents and their families. She spoke to me of her great grandparents who came from England, Germany, Poland and Spain. She spoke animatedly about her experience at the Tenement Museum visit and how difficult it was for immigrants to find a place to live. She was pretty sure that she did not want to ever have to live in a tene-

ment! Ela also saw her family name on the Wall of Honor at Ellis Island. When asked if she might consider migrating, she hesitated, saying that she really likes it in New York ... but then with a wistful look in her eye she said, "Maybe Colombia!?"

In conclusion, and on a personal note, I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss this unit with the teachers, parents and students. And, what impressed me the most was the affirmation of the wide diversity of cultures, countries and languages that we are privileged to experience at ISB. This vibrant tapestry of histories and appreciation of each family's different story is what makes our ISB family so rich.



Sponsor Spotlight: State Farm, The Robert Larson Agency

by Catherine Colton

Since 2006, ISB solicited sponsorships from businesses large and small to defray costs of organizing and running various community and fundraising events including the French & Spanish Children's Book Fair, the Children's International Film Days, and the Spring Benefit. Each of these events has grown in complexity and sophistication, thanks to the generosity and support of sponsors.



State Farm – The Robert Larson Agency, is ISB's pioneer and longest-standing sponsor. The gentleman behind the sponsorship, Robert Larson, is also a pioneer parent, who enrolled his daughter Emma (French 3rd Grade) in ISB's first year.

"The decision to sponsor was a no-brainer," said Robert Larson. "This was a great opportunity to support a school I care for and bring some exposure to my services. It was an obvious win-win."

Larson, a State Farm agent since 2002, specializes in home, auto and life insurance and has owned his own State Farm agency since 2005. Like a good ISB parent, his agency is multilingual — with agents who also speak Spanish.

Though his agency is in Queens, his clients are located throughout the five boroughs. He adds, "I encourage businesses — both local to ISB or further afield -- to consider an ISB sponsorship as it would align them to and bring them more visibility among a dedicated, tight-knit and growing community of parents."

More information on Robert Larson's agency can be found on www.robertglarson.com.