ISB Prepares for Capital Campaign
By Michael Davis-Velasco

In need of additional space to accommodate its expanding and growing student body, ISB has applied many of the same philosophies of community participation that it utilizes in its classrooms to the task of expanding its footprint. Last fall, after working with the board of directors on basic criteria for the project, ISB Co-founder and Executive Director, Rebecca Skinner, embarked on the expansion project by reaching out to diverse members of the ISB family in search of volunteers. The idea was to assemble a creative cross-section of the ISB community to find the right space and raise capital to transform the plan into reality. The response has been overwhelming. Parents brought their children’s interests and their expertise in finance, marketing, architecture, real estate, law, and every other discipline that is needed to consider all of the foreseen and unforeseen. Teachers added an understanding of the intricacies of space and facilities. Administrators offered their knowledge of institutional needs applicable to today and tomorrow. Together, they formed a community within a community and have worked arduously while having a lot of fun and satisfaction.

As its name suggests, the Site Selection Committee is responsible for evaluating buildings to host the elementary grades (237 Park Place will continue to house the preschool grades). To be eligible for consideration, each site must satisfy certain thresholds including sufficient space for classrooms, an art room, a library, and a gymnasium. One of the Committee’s members, Alison Genovese, a parent and English Kindergarten teacher at ISB, explained that as part of the evaluation, “the Committee developed a ranking system in order to value each location based on a set of criteria including proximity to the current school, lighting, outdoor space, and proximity to public transportation.” The possibility of further expansion is also an important factor. According to Alison, the ability to contribute a teacher’s perspective to the process is a unique and rewarding experience. From their hard work, three excellent candidates have been identified and the Board of Directors has targeted the end of June to make its selection.

At the same time the Site Selection Committee has been exploring and evaluating space, the Capital Campaign Committee has developed a capital drive to secure funding. Writer and parent Selwyn Hinds has played an integral role on the committee by assisting with the tag lines of the campaign, and more recently, pooling resources and contacts with other Committee members to identify and initiate conversations with potential donors. Like Alison, Selwyn is quick to describe his personal reward in being involved on the Committee, “it has been a pleasure to get involved with other parents and make such a tangible and concrete contribution to ISB.” Over the course of my conversation with Selwyn, I finally understood why every person I consulted with in order to write this article referred to Committee meetings as being so much fun. As he put it, “we have a good time and, it’s funny to watch grown-up parents loosen up with a little cheese and wine.” In the interest of full disclosure, that was a G version of his actual quote—but hey, this is a school newsletter.

Over the next months, the Capital Campaign Committee will focus predominantly on legwork for the actual fundraising and the Site Selection Committee will continue to work on budgets, design, and every other detail that the Board requests. A lot of work has been completed but the task is far from over. The Committee members and the ISB administration encourage everyone to become as involved as possible. This is truly a community process that will shape the school and our children’s immediate lives and future. For those like me, who invest time in planning your child’s life, take a moment and contribute to his or her classroom where he or she will spend the majority of the day for years to come. As always, ISB will welcome your input with warm, open arms and knowing you took a first hand role in your child’s educational environment will provide a life long satisfaction.

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A Night for Superheroes Raises Funds, Good Cheer

By Nicola Fabens

In May, the Fourth Annual Spring Benefit returned to the lovely BAMcafé space with "A Night for Superheroes." Parents, teachers, friends and supporters of bilingual education trotted out their evening clothes and gathered under the theme-appropriate silhouettes above for a night out in support of ISB.

Guests arrived to a silent auction of items donated by businesses throughout the city—from gift certificates to local restaurants and boutiques to professional services to a framed *NYT* front page announcing President Obama’s victory. As special as those things were, unique outings and experiences with ISB teachers and staff members proved to be particularly sought after. The bidding continued throughout the evening as parents and friends mingled and caught up, free of the usual constraints of drop-off and harried mornings. Bobby Sanabria and Quarteto Aché provided a suitably festive musical backdrop.

After being presented with the annual Community Excellence Award—and being subjected to a probing interview worthy of Barbara Walters by emcee Michael Eldridge—the distinctive Dan Zanes led the assembled crowd in a rousing rendition of what was billed as an old English drinking song. Children around the borough were jealous in absentia. With that, the much-anticipated cash raffle and live auction commenced: as always, week-long stays in destinations from Paris to Panama and other unique experiences drew great interest, and ISB was the beneficiary of more than a few spirited bidding wars.

In the final tally, ISB made $35,000 from the event, handily beating the $30,000 goal. A considerable achievement in any year, the total is both a boon to and a vote of confidence for the school and its continued growth. That support came from the efforts of many many people: numerous auction and event donors donated generously, while State Farm—The Robert Larson Agency, Choice Market, and Not for Tourists provided critical support as annual sponsors. Mónica Burgos and Lesley Larson put in long hours as event co-chairs and led a small army of parent volunteers in all manner of pursuits. Those efforts paid off in spades, both in fun and in funds for ISB—a night for superheroes, indeed. We look forward to seeing you next year!
**Record Number of Applications and Lingering Waitlists**

*By Delphine Michaud*

ISB recently completed another busy and successful admissions season for the 2009-2010 school year, during which the admissions team reviewed almost 200 applications and admitted 31 new families. Many families remain on the waitlist as we foresee another summer of limited opportunities for enrollment. Demand for spots at ISB continues to grow with a 28% increase in applications from the 2008-2009 school year: a true testament to the institution filling an educational void in New York City. The admissions team looks forward to the upcoming admissions season when we will be looking to double our enrollment in preparation for the expansion into a new elementary school space for the 2010-2011 school year.

As the applicant pool grows each year, so does the need for additional support. To that end, ISB parents were instrumental in contributing to a successful admissions season this year. For the first time, ISB was fortunate to have parent representatives to support its admissions efforts by sharing their ISB experiences with prospective families during Information Sessions, school tours and childrens assessments. As Nancy Woodruff, mother of a Spanish PreK student, expressed, “applying families want reassurance that what they see and read is really what they’re going to get. They really appreciate being able to ask a current parent their lingering questions.” Alex Beers, parent to a student in French Kindergarten commented, “My specific situation, that of a monolingual family new to multilingualism, gives others an understanding of inclusiveness at ISB. All are welcome here, whatever the background.” The admissions team greatly appreciates the help these ISB parents provide, like ambassadors, they help spread the ISB mission and spirit.

Things are already gearing up for the 2010-2011 admissions season! Two very well attended Information Sessions were held in May and June for families interested in getting a head start on the school search process.

**Spring Awakening**

*By Chris Taylor*

If they gave out prizes for Most Fun Per Square Foot, this year’s Spring Fling would certainly qualify.

In the cozy confines of ISB’s recreation yard on June 7 were a raucous mix of musical acts, activity stations like jewelry-making and cookie-decorating, and the usual array of delicious food. With some of the best weather so far this year, and Vanderbilt Avenue closed to traffic and transformed into a pedestrian thoroughfare, the annual festival was an unqualified hit.

It wasn’t just for fun and games, though, but to raise much-needed funds for ISB. This year’s pot of roughly $800 will be earmarked partially for providing security cameras for the school: While access to school grounds is already restricted, this will add yet another layer of security for both kids and parents.

Judging from the kids’ dancing, the highlight of the Spring Fling was the musical entertainment. True to the school’s multilingual mission, both French and Spanish bands took the stage. First were the local singers Fati and Charles, performing songs from their CD El Baile del Sombrero. Next up were the Blue Strawberries, led by Nicky Haimo, musician extraordinaire and dad to Julian (French PreK).

When they weren’t dancing, ISB kids mobbed the numerous activity stations where they could plant their own flowers; decorate their own picture frames; and do their own beadwork. They also took time to chow down on parent-provided goodies like chocolate cake and the traditional Haitian dish, Di ri kole ak pwa (red beans and rice).

Special thanks to PA co-chairs Stephanie Bayard and Sarah Andrew, for pulling off the huge organizational feat of such a successful spring festival. With the school year winding down, and preparations for summer camp ramping up, it was the ideal venue to show off the creative, fun, and multicultural environment that has come to define ISB.

**Spain Comes to ISB**

*By Muriel Stallworth and Anna Palmero*

This year, ISB was able to participate in the Spanish Language and Culture Assistant from Spain program, through which Anna Palmero was sent to us by the Spanish government with the mission to support our Spanish language immersion curriculum in any suitable way, during a one-year tenure.

From adding to the dynamics of teamwork to dispensing individualized help, Anna’s discreet yet proactive personality certainly brought the intended support. As soon as she arrived Anna immediately put to use her spirit of collaboration and never stopped dedicating her attention to our various needs, among them the expansion of our Spanish language resources.

She applied her efficient skills to areas that included sharing her practical experience and providing assistance as an auxiliary teacher in the classroom at multiple grade levels. She used her knowledge of physical education by preparing and implementing lessons plans and building long-lasting curriculum for the teachers. She participated in all Spanish teachers’ language meetings and helped develop a continuum for assessing bilingual acquisition through the grades, attended lectures and workshops at Instituto Cervantes and provided feedback and supporting documents for ISB’s ongoing staff. She also helped with curriculum research and reinforced our link with the Spanish government’s education consultants in New York, Pilar Fernandez Gonzalez and Jesus Alvarez Gonzalez.

Throughout the school, Anna’s presence was extremely appreciated and beneficial to students and teachers alike. But beyond the obvious results of her work and dedication to ISB, having Anna as a member of the ISB family deepens and makes more palpable our connection with the Spanish government by adding an element of hospitality and familiarity.

As the year draws to an end, we renewed our application for another Language and Culture Assistant. We are pleased and very grateful to learn that our request was accepted, and we are preparing to welcome a new participant in September.

Anna will heading to California, another great supporter state of bilingual education, where she will be on a new mission as a Spanish teacher. For Anna, the Brooklyn cultural experience was well worth it. She was comfortably hosted by the family of Amelie Elysee-Enette (French K), even getting a chance at practicing her French every day! On her experience at ISB, Anna comments, “The diversity of cultures within ISB is amazing, and the school has a unique system and method for learning. I am really excited about introducing these methods to the education system in Spain in the future. Teachers at ISB really let students become the focus, which is something that I’ve learned in university but haven’t seen practiced to the same extent as I’ve seen at ISB.”
Inside the Classroom: A Look at Science
By Lara Tabac

In Lina and Leticia’s Spanish K/1 Class, kids are getting down and dirty to learn concepts of science. “Science for me is a means to give students the opportunity to discover the world around them,” said Lina. “When they become scientists, they observe, they make use of their five senses, they make connections and they answer their own inquiries.”

For “Dirt,” the extremely kid-friendly science unit that will round out the school year for this class, the students examined different soil samples and conducted experiments to determine what ingredients make the best dirt. They brought worms, snails and pillbugs to class to observe these creatures in their natural habitat. From these activities they have come to understand how something as mundane as mud is actually a unique ecosystem that hosts different life forms as well as the basis for all of the food we eat.

Not-So-Mad Scientists
By Meredith Karnis

Second Grade students Isabella Barrera, Sam Henriquez and Louis Schoeppach made ISB history by being the school’s first students to enter the nationwide Exploravision Science Contest in winter 2009. The goal of the contest is to “…create and explore a vision of future technology by combining (children’s) imaginations with the tools of science.” With the help of Ms. Heidi, 1st and 2nd Grade English teacher and “part-time science consultant”, the three students challenged their competitors to a true scientific showdown. Unfortunately, our students did not win any awards this year, but they certainly did enjoy participating in the contest. I interviewed Sam about the experience:

Besides classroom study, the students went on a field trip to the Audubon Center in Prospect Park where they learned about the flora of the park and the vital role of dirt in supporting it. A second trip is planned to PS 107 where the class will participate in a project on compost to learn about decomposition and the life cycle of, among other things oranges, apples and carrots (organic of course), followed soon after by a visit to the ISB plot at the St. Mark’s Community Garden.

Studying dirt and its inhabitants has given the class an opportunity to explore elements of global citizenry, particularly how people, as well as plants and animals, live in different kinds of environments and communities. This exposure to the natural world has also initiated discussion about how to make the world a better place for everyone.

Next door in the French Nursery/PreK class, Elsa, Marianne and Celine have focused on “Animal Dwellings” and “Plants” to engage students in a study of scientific concepts. “In preschool I want my students to enter the world of science with pleasure and curiosity,” said Elsa.

To encourage this, art and tactile exploration of different materials are incorporated along with science lessons on animal habitats. This approach transformed the classroom into an imaginative natural wonderland that included a den for bears or wolves, a tree for birds and a burrow for rabbits, all made out of paper and recyclable materials. A hamster and a turtle that made guest appearances in class and a visit to the Prospect Park Zoo rounded out the exploration of animal dwellings.

Imagination played a central role in the class’s study of plants. To illustrate the concept of growing, Elsa read Jacques et le haricot magique. The next morning students were eager to see if a giant beanstalk had grown near the window where some beans had been placed. Their disappointment about the lack of a giant beanstalk (leading to a huge playground in the sky) was assuaged when they were given an opportunity to observe the growing process firsthand. Each student received a small pot and seeds to plant, along with a journal to put photos and pictures of the progress of the plants.

“They are very proud to explain to their families what they have observed and learn in class about their plants,” Elsa said. “Everyday they talk amongst themselves about which plants are growing, which are not and who needs to water their soil.”

The Sound of ISB Music
By Lara Tabac

ISB may be a French and Spanish immersion school, but thanks to music teacher Jill Penman, students have been exposed to sounds and rhythms from all over the world. During the fall semester classes focused on celebration songs from different cultures, while the spring semester was devoted to learning songs in Arabic, Swahili, Maori, Yiddish and Amharic, as well as Spanish and French.

To get kids to engage with music Jill selects songs that are written for children, but are also “real music.” She incorporates dance to demonstrate musical concepts, letting the students use their whole bodies to listen to the music and express what they hear. “What has surprised me is how much they already know about music, even at the Nursery/Pre-K level,” Jill said. “I especially love to hear their observations - they are often surprising and cause me to see and hear things differently.”

This year, Second Graders began a unit studying the recorder. It was great to see them so excited to try out their instruments at the beginning,” said Jill, who gave the students a crash course in notation. “I think they’ve learned that playing an instrument well is the result of a process and not something one is born doing; that behind the beautiful sounds are hours spent practicing.”

“I LOVE recorder,” said Isabella Barrera, a second grader in the Spanish program. She enjoyed the unit so much she got her own recorder so she can practice making those beautiful sounds at home.