

INTERNATIONAL APPEAL



DESIREE NAVARRO

Habiba Boumlik (l.), co-founder of International School of Brooklyn, goes over information with two prospective parents about private nursery to high school that will offer students total immersion in French and Spanish.

2 moms immersed in unique school plan

BROOKLYN HAS LONG BEEN ONE of the most international places in the country — and if two Brooklyn moms have their way, one day soon it will have its own international school.

Friends Habiba Boumlik, 42, and Rebecca Skinner, 29, have been toiling for nearly a year to create the International School of Brooklyn, a private nursery to high school featuring total immersion in French and Spanish.

A handful of similar bilingual schools, usually specializing in just one language, have long existed in Manhattan. But the new International School of Brooklyn would be the first of its kind in the borough, they said.

"There is no school in Brooklyn with this kind of program," said Boumlik, who got the idea for the school when she began looking for schools for her children, now 5 and 3. "This will prepare children to not only be bilingual but also biliterate."

The women, both of whom have young children and speak fluent French, had hoped to begin the project this fall by opening a trilingual nursery school in Park Slope. But those plans were abruptly put on hold last week to

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give the founders another year to get the word out about the fledgling school.

Now the school is slated to open in fall 2005, with slots for 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds in nursery school, prekindergarten and kindergarten.

Boumlik and Skinner plan to add a grade each year until the school goes through high school. Annual tuition will likely run about \$12,500, they said.

The school is modeled after one in Indianapolis called the International School of Indiana.

Like that institution, which was founded 10 years ago, the International School of Brooklyn would offer parallel programs in French and Spanish. Interested students would choose a language in preschool, and then stay with it through the end of high school.

Boumlik and Skinner said the pro-

gram is designed to give kids the chance to learn another language as a native speaker through total immersion. That means that instead of studying a language in a class as a teenager, students would be surrounded by the new language — called the target language — in preschool and learn it fluently, they said.

Also similar to the Indiana model, the Brooklyn nursery school would teach entirely in the target language. Then, beginning in first grade, instruction in English would be gradually introduced year by year until by high school, students would be taught mostly in English, as they continue to study their second language.

Students would graduate with an International Baccalaureate degree.

"The idea behind it is that by giving the children total immersion in preschool and slowly introducing English, they are able to solidify that second language," said Skinner.

"By high school, they are completely fluent and can go back and forth without any problems."

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Local teens find reward in science

BY NICOLE BODE
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SCIENCE PROJECTS about the distant past and the not-so-distant future snagged top awards for two local public high schools.

Judges at the second annual United Way of New York City Science Talent Initiative awarded second place to Franklin K. Lane High School on the Woodhaven-East New York border for its efforts to find the age of a fossilized deer tooth. John Adams High School in Ozone Park took sixth place for work on solar-powered cars.

"It's fantastic," said Bonnie Blackwell, an earth science and research teacher at Lane who helped senior Paloma Bain, 17, and junior Ravindra Mangal, 16, date the 335,000-year-old deer tooth from France.

"You're going to have to peel both of them off the ceiling, they're . . . so excited," said Blackwell. "They worked so hard on it."

Ten winners were chosen Thursday from 19 schools citywide. The Lane students took home a \$100 savings bond and a microscope, while the Adams students each received a \$50 savings bond at the awards ceremony at the New York Hall of Science in Flushing.

All 19 schools had received grants of up to \$2,500 from United Way at the beginning of the year to pay for the projects, equipment and teacher workshops.

Lane's painstaking project — which took more than a year to complete — required the teens to separate the tooth enamel from the fossilized chomper and send it to Canada for periodic nuclear zaps.

Next, the students magnetized the particles inside a spectrometer at Williams College in Massachusetts, where Blackwell, an archeological dating expert, also is a researcher. The tooth came from a new dig in France where human remains have also been found, and had not been dated before, Blackwell said.

John Adams rising seniors Irene Papadopoulos, 17, of Howard Beach and Lauren Bochat, 16, of Woodhaven earned kudos for toiling over developing a solar-powered car.

With the help of teachers Ruth Greco and Rosanna Saunders, the John Adams teens spent six months rigging a remote-controlled Barbie car up to a pair of solar-powered cells to see if solar power could hold the secret to easing the country's fuel woes.

"With the rising gas prices lately, we figured that we had to find something more efficient, but also more environmentally friendly," Papadopoulos said.

After importing a pair of \$50-a-pop, five-inch-square solar cells from England, and wiring them to a pair of AA rechargeable batteries, the teens saw battery life jump by close to three hours.

Alone, the batteries ran for four and a half hours. With a solar cell added, that jumped to seven hours on a sunny day, and six on a cloudy one.

Even when used indoors, the panels still boosted battery life by an hour.

Papadopoulos said the project shows the potential for American car manufacturers.

"They have a lot of electric cars on the market, but as far as solar-paneled, there's really nothing significant in the research," she said.

"Overseas, they use a lot of solar energy. We should really start researching over here. It's growing in popularity — [now] if they could just implement it into car technology."

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