

New wing for Ten Eyck

School celebrates 'Grade Eight Institute' with ceremony

By Vinita Singla

An old vacant gym at a Williamsburg middle school has been transformed into a dazzling yellow and blue wing.

"It's bright and when I see it, it makes me happy," said wide-eyed eighth-grader Briona Slayton at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Ten Eyck Upper School's "Grade Eight Institute" on October 17.

Hers is exactly the reaction that staff had hoped for from the predominantly low-income Hispanic students.

"The children are in better moods. They're more open to sitting in the rooms and learning," said Dean Nicole Cicileo. "Their behavior is much better because they want to be in the rooms."

The new wing, which took five months to complete and cost \$600,000 to build, has four classrooms and two offices. On September 4, the eighth-grade students were the first class to use the untouched classrooms—two for English, one for math and another for Social Studies. Staff agreed that the changes brought life to the eight-year-old school, located at 207 Bushwick Avenue.

"We watched it go from an old gym—dark and dingy—to a bright and vibrant classroom setting," said teacher Antonietta Inzerelli.

The eighth graders "feel a heightened ownership of the building and respect for learning," said Eric Unger, the computer science teacher. "There is less traffic in the hallways and



Photo by Carlos Garcia

Students, faculty and Principal Brian Walsh (right) celebrate as Danielle Capuano, assistant principal, cuts the ribbon at the ceremony for Ten Eyck's "Grade Eight Institute."

everyone feels much better."

Last year, all 310 students at Ten Eyck shared the cramped school. They pushed the desks together to make sufficient workspace because their individual desks were too small. Teachers rotated through the classrooms while the students would stay in the same seat for up to two hours. Things didn't get any better when enrollment increased by 15 percent, beginning in January.

The overcrowded conditions matched many of the students' lives at home. "Some of these students don't even have their own rooms at home," said Vice-Principal Danielle Capuano, who cut the ceremonial-red ribbon, hanging

under an arch made from silver, red and black balloons. "They feel like this is their home away from home," she said.

The eighth graders, wearing green—their grade's uniform color—cheered for Capuano and their fellow students who read poetry composed for the occasion. Some students wrote rap songs. One wrote a poem in which each sentence began with a letter from his title **NEW HALLWAY**.

More middle school students need this type of encouragement, educators say. According to a 2004-2005 Department of Education report, reading scores often plunge beginning in sixth grade and continue to decline

throughout middle school. And only 70 percent of adolescents make it to grade nine.

Capuano said the staff has warned the students, 92 percent of whom are Hispanic and the rest black—two groups with high high school drop out rates—about the consequences of quitting school.

But Principal Brian Walsh hoped the new wing would make the students happier and more successful. Adrianna Quinones, her eyes twinkled, as she looked up at the red and white banner declaring: "8th Gr. Institute." Quinones, 13, confirmed Walsh's hopes. "It's an eighth-grade only zone," she said.



New York's water taxis may be docking in your neighborhood.

Waterfront service at a dock near you

By Matthew Wolfe

Greenpoint and north Williamsburg may soon be the newest neighborhoods to receive ferry stops, as the New York Water Taxi company looks to expand local service to meet growing waterfront development.

In an interview Monday, Water Taxi President Tom Fox stated that his company was speaking with developers and local officials about stops on the East River along N. 6th Street and Greenpoint Avenue.

"It's something that's grown logically as part of the rezoning of the waterfront," said Fox.

Since 2005, the yellow fleet has operated a commuter route down the East River, with stops in Long Island City, Midtown Manhattan, Wall Street, DUMBO and outside a new condominium high-rise just south of the Williamsburg Bridge.

"With the addition of N. 6th and Greenpoint Ave., you're beginning to see a series of stops in Brooklyn where the new developments are coming in," said Fox.

The expanded taxi service and increased construction along the waterfront appear to present opportunities for both ferry operators and the developers. Fox sees new water taxi service as growing symbiotically with the new high-rise condominiums, who provide a large new client base for the taxis. The taxis in turn are an attractive selling point for developers who seek to assure their clientele of easy access to Manhattan.

The web site for the partially-constructed Schaefer Landing Condominiums, which is located next to the current Williamsburg stop, already prominently displays the availability of water taxis outside its building.

New York Water Taxi is also currently in talks with

a number of developers, including the current owners of Domino Sugar and the Greenpoint lumber yards, about picking up marketing costs for the taxis and the possibility of special promotions, such as discounts for new tenants, said Fox.

While growing in popularity, the Brooklyn-Manhattan ferry service still receives heavy subsidies from both the city and federal governments. Federal funds have been appropriated by New York Congressional Representatives Jerry Nadler and Carolyn Maloney for the construction of waterside docks, said Fox, while the city is helping to subsidize the operating costs of the vehicles.

Add that to the marketing costs taken on by the developers, and "you have everyone sharing the risk, if you will," said Fox, noting that it is these subsidies which allow water taxis to compete with other forms of public transportation without being overly expensive.

A one-way ticket to midtown from the Schaefer Landing condos is \$4.50 and \$5.50 to Wall Street.

The additional North Brooklyn service is in part a response to a request for proposals from the city Economic Development Committee for use of the East River, which has sought to expand and enhance waterfront use.

Water taxi use is consistent with Mayor Michael Bloomberg's GreenNYC initiative, says Fox, in which the Mayor proposes to replace much of New York City's infrastructure with sustainable, environmentally-friendly alternatives, including the development of a "green" waterfront.

Fox said that the company has spoken with local Community Board 1 frequently and that they have expressed approval of expanded service.

Have a Williamsburg Halloween

Looking for a Halloween Parade where your kids won't get smothered and smashed amongst NYC crowds? The super-kid friendly neighborhood of Williamsburg is hosting a parade for families with kids of all ages, October 31.

Parents, kids and tots dressed in their best costumes will join the cool artist families of Williamsburg on the "The Witches' Walk," the Williamsburg Halloween

Parade. Zoe, the Williamsburg Witch will lead Halloween enthusiasts on a parade through the friendly businesses of Williamsburg for some trick or treating and special surprises.

The parade begins at 4 p.m. at Flying Squirrel, 96 North 6th Street between Berry & Wythe streets. There will be a spooky room and treats and a chance to get a free photo of your kids in costume with Zoe (photos will be

provided by Rachel Enkind Photography).

At 5 p.m. Willyburg Witch will lead her walk from Flying Squirrel to the kid-pit-stops off of Bedford Avenue. The parade will stop at the following stores for special surprises & sweets: Sweet William, 112 North 6th Street @ Berry; Area Kids, 218 Bedford Avenue @ North 5th; Mini Jake, 178 North 9th Street between Bedford & Driggs; McCarren Garden, North 12th Street between

Driggs & Union.

The parade will go from 4-6 p.m. and for those who want to continue with the party, the walk will continue four blocks to Mamalu's Play & Munch Ground, 232 North 12th Street between Driggs & Union for The Halloween Bash with Gwendolyn & The Good Times Gang.

For details on Mamalu's Halloween Bash, contact Mamalu at 718-486-6312. For more, call Flying Squirrel at 718-218-7775.